

**“Develop your thought leadership by
getting the most from your
employees...”**



Thought Leader Protocol

A Step-By-Step System For Hiring,
Motivating, and Coaching Your Employees to
Profits by Developing Thought Leadership

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Introduction

What is the Thought Leadership Protocol?

It is a step by step system for hiring, motivating and coaching your employees to profits by developing thought leadership. This may sound circular, but in order to be known as a thought leader in your leadership role, you need to use all of your available resources, including your best resource...your employees/team.

Some associate “thought leadership” in terms of branding, publishing, speaking, or being considered a world-class expert in a particular field. After doing a considerable amount of thinking, reflection, research, and observation, I’ve concluded that thought leaders have a dedicate team of committed professionals supporting their work. History is replete with great thought leaders from the beginning of human history, who had a team of people who understood their thoughts or “ideas” and helped that individual carry out those ideas. How did they do this? How did they motivate, train, coach/mentor their followers to take their ideas to world? These are great questions. This eBook will provide 21st Century business approaches to these questions. This is intended for leaders in all fields who aspire to be thought leaders and the best way to build and lead a team of people to become thought leaders themselves. This eBook will teach you the fundamental processes, behaviors and actions necessary to start this journey. This is really building an infrastructure to support your thought leadership.

- Learn how to use the exact interview questions that hire the right people for your team.
- Learn how to motivate, train, and coach your employees to be more accountable to do things right the first time, with fewer errors and less rework for you, thus giving you more time to focus on thought leadership and more profits.
- Learn how to build an infrastructure that works by itself, empowers your employees be lead, to complete projects, and gives you more time to focus on strategic thought leadership to build your personal brand, get published, attract and acquire more clients to get more profits.

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Chapter 1: Get the Right People for Your Team by Using the Best Interview Questions

Structured Interviews Overview

One of the most important tasks you will conduct as part of the hiring process is that of interviewing potential candidates.

Research shows that structured interviews improve the prediction of on-the-job performance.

The key principles of effective employment interviewing include:

- **Job-relatedness:** You should make sure that every topic and question relates to the job or your organizational mission.
- **Objectivity:** All criteria must be as measurable as possible. Even subjective judgments must be based on external events and observable behaviors.
- **Factual data:** During the interview, note what the interviewee says, not how you feel about what you are hearing.

These principles are important because they help to ensure that the selection process is fair, objective, and legally defensible.

A structured interview is an interview that:

- Uses multiple strategies, such as questions based on job analysis, detailed rating scales, consistent presentation, and trained interviewers;
- Is more job-related and systematic;
- Differentiates among candidates;
- Asks consistent questions for each candidate; and
- Has the primary questions written prior to the interview.

While the general flow of a structured interview is predetermined by the interview questions, it may vary slightly based on the answers provided by the interviewee.

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The objective of a structured interview is to learn as much as possible about each candidate in the time available and to ensure that you are asking each candidate the same primary questions so that you can do a fair comparison.

Structured Interview Elements

Structured interviews involve:

- Questions based on a job analysis;
- Questions which are designed effectively to elicit certain information;
- Questions asked of all candidates in the same order;
- Detailed rating scales;
- Prepared/trained interviewers;
- Interview panels;
- Effective notes; and
- An objective assessment of candidates.

Behavioral-Based Question Characteristics

A key technique in structured interviews is the use of behavioral-based questions.

The best indicator of future performance is past performance. Behavioral-based interview questions help you predict future performance.

When measured against other methods of interviewing, such as non-behavioral interviews, references, personality tests, work-sample tests, ability, and biographical data, behavioral-based interviews rate higher for their ability to predict success on the job.

The behavioral-based interview yields a detailed description of how a person actually behaves under real job conditions.

When using this interview method, your role is to get the candidate to give you specific examples and stories that describe his or her specific behaviors, thoughts, and actions in actual work situations.

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There are some basic techniques to making interview questions more behavioral or situational in nature, which aids the interviewer by providing the following information:

- Situation: What was the problem?
- Behavior: How did you go about solving it?
- Outcome: What difficulties or obstacles did you have to overcome in order to implement your solution?

Behavioral questions are never answered with a mere one-word, “yes/no” response, but rather with a more thought-provoking and subjective response.

They do provide the interviewer and the selecting official with critical information to use in making their final selection, in terms of such things as whether the candidate will fit the culture of the organization, the candidate’s ability to think on his or her feet, and what the candidate will likely do if placed in another similar situation.

Interviewing Phases

- Step 1: Prepare for the interview.
- Step 2: Conduct the interview.
- Step 3: Document the results carefully.
- Step 4: Make your selection and be prepared to justify your decision based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities used for selection.

More on Step 2: Conduct the Interview

There are four components of an interview:

1. The opening, which is when you greet the candidate, welcome him/her, and state the purpose of the interview:
 - Keep it short.
 - Get acquainted with the candidate, and the candidate acquainted to the position.
2. The body, which includes all types of questions:
 - For key areas of competence, ask multiple questions.

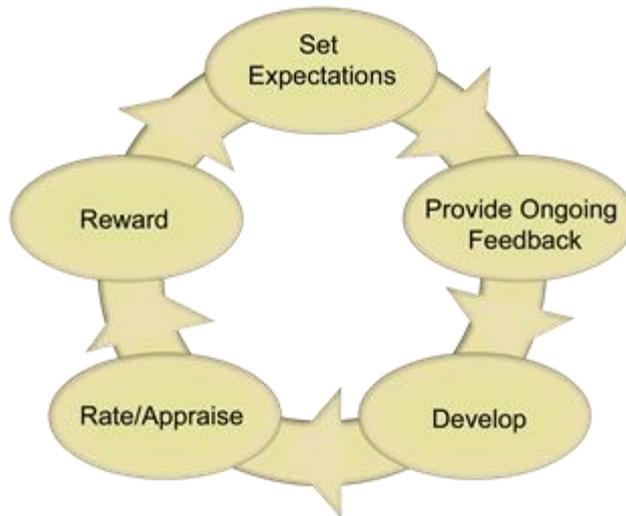
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3. The closing, where you give the candidate a chance to ask questions, and tell the candidate what will happen next
4. The evaluation, where you should evaluate and document the interview immediately afterward, so that it stays fresh in your mind

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Chapter 2: Motivate, Train, and Coach Your Employees to Profits

The Performance Management Cycle



In order to get results through others, the following components of managing performance are essential:

- Set performance expectations that are aligned with work unit and organizational objectives.
- Provide ongoing feedback, both positive and constructive, to let employees know where they stand.
- Develop employees by addressing poor performance and improving good performance.
- Periodically rate/appraise performance in a summary fashion.
- Reward good performance.

Performance management goes beyond the regulatory requirements to appraise and rate performance. Appraising performance is only one part of the overall process.

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The “giving” and “getting” communication skills are used throughout the performance management process to stimulate employee involvement and accountability and minimize surprises at appraisal time.

Building the Infrastructure and Context for High Performance

Context Defined

The right context or climate must exist for high performance. By right context we mean an environment that stimulates and supports manager and employee efforts toward achieving results. A context for high performance allows managers and employees to direct their efforts toward high performance.

Thought leaders are key contributors to setting the context for high performance. They are adept at balancing business results with human interactions and set clear performance expectations up front.

Creating the Environment

*For employees to fully support the organization, they must first understand how their accountabilities fit into the larger context. This requires disciplined communication about:

- The “whats,” “hows,” and “whys” of the two levels above them
- Your framework and expectations for interactions among the workgroup
- The Global Picture which includes the organizational background mission and major thrusts
- The Big Picture which includes assignments that your boss has and his/her plan and “logic” for addressing them
- The Immediate Picture, which includes the assignments that you have, along with your plan and “logic” for addressing them

Balancing Business Purposes and Human Interactions

It’s important for managers to be aware of the balance required between the business purpose of their interactions and the human needs of the people they manage.

Every interaction at work operates on a business and a human level. The business level focuses on the mission and work results while the human level satisfies the employee’s need for participation, encouragement, and support.

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Establishing Performance Expectations

Establishing performance expectations means setting achievable objectives and timeframes for individuals and groups to channel their efforts toward achieving work unit objectives.

Performance expectations are critical to setting the right context for high performance to occur.

Getting employees involved in this process will help them understand the goals of the organization, what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how well it should be done.

Characteristics of Performance Expectations

Performance expectations provide a foundation for all performance management activities. Expectations are used throughout the appraisal cycle to monitor performance, provide feedback, coach and counsel, frame progress reviews, and rate and recognize performance. Therefore, performance expectations must be established at the beginning of the performance management cycle.

- Expectations provide focus for the employee on the most important or critical aspects of the job.
- They should be as specific and concrete as possible, without being overly restrictive.
- Expectations should be in writing and serve as a beneficial working document that is discussed often, not merely paperwork that is filed in a drawer and seen only when ratings are done. When/if problems arise during the year; managers should be able to return to discussions of individual goals/expectations.
- Expectations should be explicitly communicated to employees and understood, if not agreed upon, by both parties.

SMART Criteria for Developing Performance Expectations

Guidelines for Developing Performance Expectations

When writing performance expectations, you first want to identify the outputs (major products or services) required for the employee's job, i.e., what needs to be done. Examples of outputs include responding to customer inquiries or writing reports.

Next, identify at what level you want this to be achieved. You may already have existing elements and standards to go by.

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SMART Criteria for Developing Performance Expectations

- Specific means that expectations are clear, concrete, and definite.
- Measurable means that expectations are quantified - i.e., observable or verifiable - so you can evaluate performance.
- Achievable means that expectations are realistic and attainable. Expectations should be a stretch, but not impossible.
- Relevant means that the expectations are linked to the job and work unit and organization objectives.
- Time-based means that work unit objectives have reasonable timeframes that include dates and deadlines.

Which example below is a SMART performance expectation?

SMART Example #1: Develop high-quality training materials for performance management course to increase awareness of the program; conduct at least two training sessions during the appraisal period; receive a satisfactory score of at least 4 on a 5-level scale from at least 80 percent of attendees.

SMART Example #2: Achieve 100 percent satisfaction rate on new process for coordinating health-related information; over the next 2 years, establish program for monitoring satisfaction levels; receive no complaints during implementation period.

Activity: Developing SMART Performance Expectations

Instructions: Working individually, think of an employee who reports to you and write two performance expectations for that employee's position following the SMART criteria. When you are finished, talk to your table group to get feedback on whether your expectations fit the SMART criteria.

Expectation 1:

Expectation 2:

Are the expectations:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable

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- Relevant
- Time-based

Ensuring that your employees know specifically what success looks like, or your expectations, requirements, and what they need to do to get the results you want in order to generate profits for you and your team.

Communicating your expectations is the most important thing you will do as a leader. You may need to have several conversations with your team to ensure there is clarity with the performance results you require. Repeating yourself in this context is a good thing to do. It's better to ensure understanding upfront and ongoing then assume your team understands and wait for the results at the end of the project.

Strategies for Developing Employees

Individual Development Plan (IDP): A formal document that identifies an employee's learning and development goals. The manager and employee jointly develop the IDP. It contains training, education, and development activities (formal and informal) to acquire the competencies needed to meet IDP goals.

Special Assignments/Job Rotation: Temporary duties performed by the employee on a full-time or part-time basis, or a temporary lateral move into an established or "shadow" position.

On-the-Job Training: A manager or an experienced employee instructing an employee at work to develop new skills, enhance performance, or correct deficiencies.

Coaching: A manager or an experienced employee providing insight and guidance to help an employee achieve his/her potential.

Mentoring: A formal or an informal relationship between senior and junior employees for the purpose of supporting learning and development. The mentor provides ongoing support, advice, and career direction to an employee. A mentor holds a higher position and is usually outside the employee's chain of supervision.

Action Learning: A continuous process of learning and reflection with the intention of solving a real work problem.

Learning Groups (Teams): Employees meeting to focus on their own learning and development in a particular interest area such as information technology, public speaking, or career paths.

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Self-Development: The employee taking personal responsibility for his/her own learning and development through a process of assessment, reflection, and taking action.

Guidelines for Providing On-the-Job Training

1. Provide an overview of the task and its importance to the work group or organization. Wherever possible, relate the new task to something the employee already knows.
2. Describe what you expect the employee should be able to do.
3. Start with general steps, and then break it into small pieces. “Chunk it.” Allow the employee to jump in with questions throughout the demonstration. Proceed to the next chunk only when the employee has mastered the previous chunk.
4. Demonstrate each step.
5. Allow for ample practice. Start with the employee doing the task with your help and conclude with the employee completing the task independently.
6. Provide feedback and give additional instructions if needed.

Using the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a Performance Tool

Purpose:

- Master skills and competencies
- Focus on the competencies to be developed
- Close develop a skill gap
- Help a star performer perform even better

Steps for Developing an IDP:

1. Review the employee’s present job, performance plan and anticipated assignments.
2. Review the employee’s existing knowledge, skills, and abilities (competencies).
3. Set goals for development
4. Encourage your employee to construct the IDP
 - The IDP should contain:

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- Target competencies or developmental objectives
- Learning methods (training, developmental assignments, special projects, memberships in professional organizations)
 - o Target dates for accomplishing these objectives and competencies
 - o Approximate cost, if any

5. The employee and manager should set dates to review the IDP periodically to see adjustments are necessary

Coaching and Mentoring Employees in the Context of Performance:

Professionals in the field of professional coaching will make attempts to make clear distinctions between coaching and mentoring. However, your role as a supervisor/manager requires that you play the role of both mentor and coach to your employees. The major difference is that you are not a disinterested third party. You have “skin” in the game since you are accountable for the work your employees do and the results they achieve. The International Coach Federation defines coaching as partnering with individuals and groups in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Having said this, your ability to balance your need to get work done through others and being both a coach and mentor to your employees will no doubt increase your effectiveness as a supervisor, and the morale and productivity of your team. Your outcome for coaching or mentoring is to get optimal results through the engagement and development of others. As a mentor you also have a longer view of the employee’s career goals and aspirations and what things might be able to help them along that path and balance that with the goals and priorities of the organization.

Essential Coaching Skills

To be an effective coach/mentor, empathic and active communication skills are paramount. Effective coaches and mentors use the following sets of skills:

- Observe
- Ask powerful questions
 - o Replaces “telling,” “directing,” giving advice

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- o “What” and “how” NOT “WHY”
- Offer grounded assessments or feedback (provide your assessments based on observable data)
 - Listen
 - o Listening without the filter of your experience
- Create momentum
 - o Offer ideas for homework
 - o Keep the conversation fluid and alive
 - o Offer suggestions (not telling them what to do) for their consideration “You might want to try...” or “You might want to look into _____ for further consideration.” Provide your employee with choices

Some attributes of successful coaches/mentors:

- Curious
- Open
- Present
- Timely and regular in feedback
- Focused and balanced in feedback
- Self-aware
- Studied

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Chapter 3: Building the Infrastructure to Increase Thought Leadership

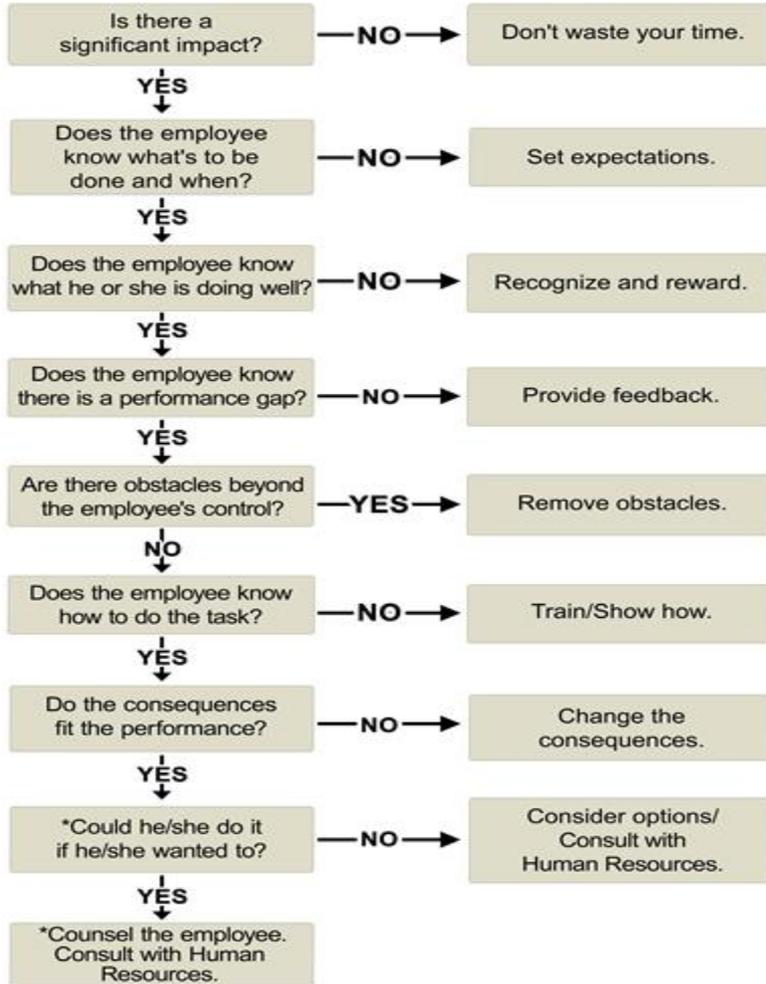
The Performance Analysis Framework

The performance analysis framework is a problem-solving process that can be used with problem performers or star performers who are working to achieve higher goals. The framework allows you to define the performance problem/area for improvement and its causes before selecting and implementing solutions. This is a continual process that only requires your intervention when there are performance problems. The more you motivate, train and coach your team on an ongoing basis; you'll be able to deal with problems when they are small rather than having them consume you.

The decision matrix of the Performance Analysis Framework is on the next page. Descriptions of each decision point are provided in subsequent pages.

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Performance Analysis Framework



**These steps relate to performance problems.*

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Decision Point #1: Is There a Significant Impact?

The first decision point is to determine if the performance in question is having a significant impact. That is, is there a performance gap that is significantly impacting performance?

Performance Gap Defined

A performance gap is a discrepancy between the employee's current level of performance and expected level of performance. That is, how well is the employee performing now compared with how well he/she should be performing according to performance expectations?

How to Determine if There Is a Performance Gap

- Observe or measure current performance and identify indicators of the problem: What is the employee doing that is negatively affecting performance? Indicators should be specific, objective, and measurable.
- Compare current performance with expectations and standards set forth in the performance plan, making sure the expectations are realistic.
- Develop a clear statement of the discrepancy between the employee's actual and expected levels of performance.

Determining Significance

Questions to determine if the performance gap is having a significant impact include:

- What would the negative consequence be?
- Has the negative consequence occurred or is it likely to occur?
- If it occurs once, are you willing to accept the consequences?

Decision Point #2: Does the Employee Know What is to be Done and When?

Alice: "Which way should I go?"

Cheshire Cat: "Where do you want to end up?"

Alice: "I don't know!"

Cheshire Cat: "Then it really doesn't matter which road you take."

-- Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

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Once you have determined that there is a significant performance issue, your next task is to move to Decision Point #2, “Does the Employee Know What’s To Be Done and When?” In other words, you need to ensure that performance expectations are clear to the employee.

Even with clear written expectations, managers can trip up in communicating them. When there are discrepancies between expected performance and current performance (i.e., performance gaps), consider the possibility that performance expectations were not communicated clearly.

Decision Point #3: Does the Employee Know What He or She Is Doing Well?

“You can expect to see the behaviors you reward.”

- Michael LeBoeuf, GMP

“A pat on the back is only a few vertebrae removed from a kick in the pants, but it is miles ahead in results.”

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox

If you have clarified performance expectations, your next decision point is to ask, “Does the employee know what he/she is doing well?”

Decision Point #4: Does the Employee Know There Is a Performance Gap?

The next decision point in the framework is to ask, “Does the employee know there is a performance gap?” If there is a performance gap which the employee has not recognized, the manager must provide the employee with performance feedback.

Characteristics of Effective Constructive Feedback

- Directed at something that can be changed - Feedback should focus on something the person can actually change.
- Descriptive rather than judgmental - Feedback should be based on facts and observed behavior, not opinions or judgments. People can usually accept feedback as long as they don’t feel personally attacked. Always avoid negative generalizations (e.g., lazy, irresponsible, bad attitude). For example, say, “Your report has several grammatical and spelling errors in it” rather than “Your work is sloppy.”
- Specific - Feedback should include specific examples and details of what the employee actually did or does on the job. Stay away from vague generalizations, such as “always,” “never,” “usually,” or “you did a good job,”

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these do not help the person who is receiving the feedback. Tell the person how the behavior is impacting you, the customer, and/or work unit objectives. For example, say, “Your delay in getting those chapters to me slows down the entire project” rather than “You’re always late.”

- **Timely** - It is best that feedback be given as soon after the event as possible. If you wait too long, you may forget important information. However, sometimes it’s best to think about what you need to say and set aside a time and place to give the feedback.
- **Private** - It is more appropriate and respectful to correct behavior in private.
- **Accurate** - Be sure to have your facts straight before providing feedback. Inaccurate feedback will only cause defensiveness and can undermine trust.
- **Checked with the receiver for understanding** - “Do you remember what I am talking about?” “What do you gather from what I said?”

Steps to Giving Performance Feedback (Providing Information)

1. State the positive purpose of the information (feedback) you want to convey to your employee. (You want to convey that this is a positive conversation where you will provide constructive information for their benefit.)
2. Describe your observations of behaviors or actions in specific terms.
3. State the individual or organizational results, impact, or consequences of the behavior or action you’ve observed.
4. Ask for their point of view.
5. Move toward solutions by exchanging ideas on how to resolve the issue.
6. Demonstrate your support and set a follow up date to check progress.

Decision Point #5: Are There Obstacles Beyond the Employee’s Control?

Causes of Performance Gaps

This decision point encourages you to look at obstacles beyond the person’s control, that is, something or someone that is getting in the way of performance. When looking for causes of performance gaps, it is important to look at both the environment and the employee. Managers often focus on what’s missing in the employee without regard to external causes.

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This decision point encourages you to consider potential obstacles in the environment that are beyond the person's control (i.e., something or someone that is getting in the way of performance).

These obstacles can take many forms, and you have to use your knowledge, experience, and influence to modify or remove those obstacles to support performance.

Strategies for Removing Obstacles to Performance

- Provide staff resources (e.g., additional people on the project).
- Use your influencing skills to get needed tools, equipment, and/or supplies.
- Allow adequate time for completion of work.
- Provide the necessary information to complete the task (e.g., data, rationale, standard operating procedures).
- Identify possible stressors in the environment and work to reduce them (or at least provide an opportunity for the employee to have a break from them).
- Eliminate environmental conditions that have negative consequences for successful performance (e.g., align workloads; ensure employee isn't punished for efficient performance with extra work).
- Consider ways in which you could be an obstacle (e.g., creating stress, not allowing sufficient time).
- Ask the employee for solutions and use them if possible.

Decision Point #6: Does the Employee Know How To Do the Task?

I've learned from my mistakes. I'm sure I could repeat them exactly.

- Peter Cook, Frog and Peach

If external obstacles are not impacting performance, the next step is to consider if the employee has the knowledge, skills, and/or ability to perform the task or tasks at hand. Even your best or most experienced performer may have difficulty with some tasks. For example, the employee may never have received training on a new task.

Working through this decision point also provides an excellent opportunity to identify employees' developmental needs and to increase their capacity to perform. See Chapter 2 for Strategies for Developing Employees.

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Decision Point #7: Do the Consequences Fit the Performance?

Once you have addressed potential causes of the performance gap - obstacles or skills - you next check to see if the consequences you are providing fit the performance. Following are three questions that you can ask to determine an adequate fit between performance and consequences:

1. Are there negative consequences when the employee performs properly or appropriately (e.g., does the person get extra work assignments because he/she is efficient in meeting deadlines)?
2. Are there positive consequences when the employee does not perform properly (e.g., if an employee misses a deadline, is the work assigned to someone else)?
3. Is the employee held accountable for performance (i.e., are any consequences provided at all)?

Activity: Aligning Consequences With Performance

1. Identify any negative consequences that currently exist for your high performers (e.g., does the person get extra work assignments because he/she is efficient in meeting deadlines?).
2. List what you can do to remove these negative consequences and replace them with positive ones.
3. Identify any positive consequences that currently exist for your poor performers (e.g., if an employee misses a deadline, is the work assigned to someone else?).
4. List what you can do to remove these positive consequences and replace them with more appropriate ones.

Decision Point #8:

Could the Employee Do the Job if He or She Wanted To?

At this juncture, it is important to ask if the employee has the capacity to perform.

Options for handling employees who don't have the capacity to perform include:

- Transfer the employee.
- Change the job function.

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- Terminate the employee.
- Refer the employee to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Managers should consult with a member of the Human Resources team when considering any of these options.

If the answer is “yes,” i.e., the employee does have the capacity to perform but is not motivated to do so, you may first want to consider how to motivate the employee before moving to formal counseling.

Taking More Formal Action: Counseling the Employee

Our assumption up to this point has been that the employee will see the benefit of improving his/her performance and participate actively in the process.

You may need to provide formal performance counseling to the employee. If this is the case, you will need to involve Human Resources.

The purpose of the formal counseling discussion is the same as that of all the steps we’ve discussed thus far - to redirect an employee’s behavior to improve performance.

Summary

Am I expected to be the smartest person in the room to be a thought leader?

This is a very interesting question. Based on 30 years of experience working with leaders from private, public, and non-profit sectors, new and experienced leaders struggle with letting go of their expertise. They live by the old adage that “if you need to get something done right, you have to do it yourself!” Could this be you? What is the payoff for you to do everything yourself? What is the cost to your business? Lost profits, long hours, unmotivated employees, sabotage by employees, are just a few. What is the cost to you personally? What about your relationships, your family, your friends and colleagues?

By not delegating and allowing your team to take manageable risks and mistakes, you run the risk of losing the very resources which will make you the thought leader you’ve always wanted to be. Think of it, more time to be creative, more time to conduct research, more time to mentor, conduct seminars, and speaking engagements, more time to pursue the things you’ve always wanted to pursue. The possibilities are endless.

What else do I need to do to become the thought leader?

There are a few things I recommend that you do.

First, hire a coach. My team at Change by Design Coaching can help you with a variety of managerial concerns. Contact me at MyersAlanL@gmail.com or 301-660-LEAD (5323). I will provide you a free leadership coaching session to help you figure out the best thought leadership strategies for you. I also provide several programs that will hone and enhance your leadership skills.

Second, become part of a “mastermind” coaching group consisting of like-minded professionals who will support and coach you on your goals. I offer mastermind groups at reasonable rates as well. Mastermind groups typically get coaching on the specific goals that members of the group want to work on.

Thirdly, hire a coach for your team. I work with intact work groups and teams to develop individual leadership skills.

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Fourthly, participate in leadership programs that will hone and enhance your leadership skills. These programs are offered either in person or virtually over a period of time. Contact me for additional information.

- Thought Leadership 101: Leadership skills for every employee in the organization.
- Thought Leadership in Context: This program is for employees or supervisors in first-line leadership positions.
- Dimensions of Thought Leadership: This program is intended for senior leaders in the organization who manage other leaders in the organization.
- Executive Thought Leadership: This is a coaching program for executives and executive teams using coaching, and action learning principles that take the learning back to the real world to solve business problems.