



The Shocking Truth Behind Poor Performance

“They’ve got a bad attitude.”

“They think they’re better than they are.”

“They don’t fit in around here.”

“They simply don’t have the skills to do the job.”

“They just don’t understand me.”

These are just some of the judgements that Managers may make when dealing with poor performance but what if instead of blaming people, Managers put their own management skills in the spotlight?

When Managers see employees as problems to fix they might be looking at the situation through the lens of a top-down, command and control leadership model. Even with good intentions, Managers that try to coerce others to share their worldview (or one that they have borrowed from their own Leaders) are unlikely to resolve any ‘performance’ issues that they encounter. If however, Managers take a moment to challenge what they think they know about performance management and make changes to the way they act, then they have a much better chance of turning around performance.

Because, the shocking truth is not found in the extreme examples of poor performance - these events are often swiftly handled in conjunction with the help of the HR team - the real danger is when mediocre performance is allowed to thrive. Mediocre performance is rarely addressed and often goes unnoticed. Mediocre performers hide in plain sight. They are competent but disengaged; they are likely to be demotivated or disillusioned. As a result, they may consciously or subconsciously choose to withhold the discretionary effort that can transform their mediocrity into excellence.

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To turn mediocrity into excellence, the first thing the Manager should notice is that it is the quality of the employment experience rather than the individual that is mediocre. By acknowledging this the Manager must begin to accept that they play a pivotal role in changing that experience if they want to release higher levels of contribution and performance.

This isn't just another hand holding exercise for a largely Millennial workforce. Yes, we hear a lot about how Millennials search for meaning and purpose at work, yet in reality, isn't this an innate need in all human beings? The Millennials aren't so different from everyone else, but perhaps what sets this generation apart is that they have grown up with an expectation that they will be heard, that they will be able to effect change and impact the course of life.

In parallel, as organisations develop towards a more agile future they are more likely to recruit people who are naturally curious, flexible and change-oriented. But, when these types of people then receive edicts that are agreed out of sight and implemented through rigid performance management systems, it's not a surprise that some people are left feeling disengaged and disempowered at the hands of their more stoic Managers.

We already know from a recent Gallup Survey that 50% of leavers exit because of the relationship they have with their Managers, but the hard truth is that those people have been showing up to work every day for weeks, months, even years before they leave, feeling unable and perhaps unwilling to contribute in a way that really adds value.

With this in mind, Managers should take stock of the relationships they form with people at work. This includes: how they involve people in decision making, how they share ownership with others and how they can help to connect everyday actions with a wider purpose in a way that is meaningful to people in different ways.

One way that Managers can achieve this is by using more of an 'Enquiry-Led Approach' that is central to an 'Operational Coaching' style.

This approach helps Managers to stop telling and start asking. The simple act of enquiry has the power to change the nature of every interaction a Manager has with others. Instead of dictating what must happen, Managers can use an 'Operational Coaching' style to invite people to put their own thoughts and ideas into the mix. This participation can ignite greater ownership for the end result, and in the long run, help people to deliver higher levels of performance.

So, let's get honest about the real reasons behind poor performance. Before casting blame let's start looking at what Managers can do differently to generate behaviour changes, first in themselves, and then in others.

Notion is an expert in behavioural change. To find out more about how 'Operational Coaching' can help Managers to adopt the skills needed

to generate high performance visit us by [clicking here](#) or call us for an informal chat on +44 (0) 1926 889 885.

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