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Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

Positive Approaches to Resolving Performance and Conduct Problems



Instructor Guide

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Phone: 0040 734 350 525

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Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Please note: Only the pages highlighted in yellow below are those featured in this preview.

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Positive Approaches to Resolving Performance and Conduct Problems

Course objectives

- Define and identify problem employees or nonperformers.
- Assess and confront problem behaviors before more drastic measures need to be taken.
- Conduct a successful confrontation session.

Course objectives (cont.)

- Develop and communicate standards that will ensure high quality performance.
- Create a plan for employee "buy-in" and determine what helps motivate your employees.
- Carry out disciplinary sessions that work for both you and your employees.

Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Define and identify problem employees or nonperformers
- ◇ Assess and confront problem behaviors before more drastic measures need to be taken
- ◇ Conduct a successful confrontation session
- ◇ Develop and communicate standards that will ensure high quality performance
- ◇ Create a plan for employee "buy-in" and determine what helps motivate your employees
- ◇ Carry out disciplinary sessions that work for both you and your employees

Chapter One



FINDING AND ASSESSING PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

Four reasons for poor performance

Don't know

- Does the employee have adequate training for the job?

Can't do

- Does the employee have the capability to do quality work?

Isn't allowed

- Does the employee have the necessary tools, systems, processes, and support to perform the job?

Won't do

- Does the employee have an interest in doing the work?

Performance problem	Possible solution
Don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Assess knowledge gap □ Provide skills training □ Communicate more effectively □ Foster development through job shadowing, mentoring, etc.
Can't do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Determine appropriate career path □ Identify opportunities for relocating □ Assess necessary steps for removal
Isn't allowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Improve processes □ Improve work flow and integration □ Control aspects of the work environment that the employee can't
Won't do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Clarify roles and responsibilities □ Communicate specific expectations □ Determine motivators □ Identify consequences for nonperformance

Isn't allowed: An employee is required to book appointments using Outlook but doesn't have access to a computer.

Won't do: An employee feels that copying and filing aren't part of her responsibilities and refuses to do those tasks.

Four reasons for poor performance

- **Don't know:** An employee isn't scheduling meeting rooms in Outlook because she hasn't had training.
- **Can't do:** An employee has been assigned to work in an area that requires strong technical knowledge and she doesn't have the capacity to learn and understand the complexities of technology.

Four reasons for poor performance (cont.)

- **Isn't allowed:** An employee is required to book appointments using Outlook but doesn't have access to a computer.
- **Won't do:** An employee feels that copying and filing aren't part of her responsibilities and refuses to do those tasks.

Activity: Ask four volunteers to stand. Request that the first person say the "Pledge of Allegiance" in Spanish. Most people don't know how to do this. Ask the second volunteer to say the "Pledge" backward—most people can't do this. Ask the third volunteer to say the "Pledge," but as they do, interrupt constantly and ask them to move to another part of the room, then ask them to speak louder—in essence, not allowing them to complete the task. Ask the fourth volunteer to go to the front reception area and greet an incoming customer by saying the "Pledge." Most people are unwilling to do this. This activity demonstrates categories of performance issues.

Examples: Don't know: an employee isn't scheduling training rooms in Outlook because she hasn't had training.

Can't do: An employee has been assigned to work in an area that requires strong technical knowledge and the employee doesn't have the capacity to learn and understand the

Dealing with your own emotions when you confront employees

Be careful of “manager’s failure mindset”

- ◇ Don’t be a watchdog.
- ◇ Don’t be an ostrich.
- ◇ Don’t create a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- ◇ Don’t lower your expectations.

The negative feedback cycle

- ◇ Establishing and communicating negative expectations
 - Criticizing more frequently
 - Interrupting more frequently
 - Providing less detailed feedback and information
 - Praising less frequently
 - Paying less attention
 - Waiting less time for employees to state their opinions
- ◇ Employees respond to expectations by adjusting their behavior to match them
- ◇ Original expectation becomes true

Self-fulfilling prophecy: Most of the time our perceptions about a situation are influential enough that they end up becoming the reality—whether they’re true or not. During all your dealings with a nonperformer, remember that until you have discussed a particular issue with him or her you are basing decisions on your perception and not necessarily the facts.

Lower expectations: If you expect too little from your employees and you do not present new challenges, your employees will come to doubt their own thinking and your confidence in them. When they lose the confidence of their manager, only negative things follow.



Ask participants if they notice what happens when they become suspicious of and unsatisfied with an employee's performance. Whether they realize it or not, they may begin to create a "failure mindset" for them. With time, they may stop believing in the employee and a cycle starts that revolves around low morale, low performance, and deterioration of performance.

Once this failure mindset has been established, sometimes managers try to fix the problem with solutions that only make it worse.

Watchdog: Watching over employees and judging everything that they do or say can cause great stress and an unnatural environment for your employees.

Ostrich: The ostriches stick their head in the sand and avoid one-to-one confrontation with problem employees. They may decide to confront them in an e-mail or memo. Don't fall into this trap. Good managers make the time and effort to "do the right thing" and discuss issues in person with their employees. The fact that you made time in your schedule to speak with your employees shows that you support them and are available for help if they need it.

Run a successful confrontation session

What's the "TRIC"?

When the time comes to confront an employee you may find yourself tongue-tied. The model below illustrates a scripted guideline that is helpful when running a successful confrontation session.

TRIC Model	Example
Tell the specific behavior that you would like to have changed.	<i>"When you forget to prep the food for the next shift..."</i>
Recognize what you are feeling about the situation or behavior.	<i>"I get frustrated because it slows down the next team's dinner service..."</i>
Identify the replacement behavior that you would like to see.	<i>"What I would like to see happen is that you would follow this checklist that I have established to make sure that you have completed all the items before you leave."</i>
Confirm understanding and end on a positive note.	<i>"Can you explain back to me why I think this is important? I really appreciate having you as part of the team and it is important to me that you are successful working here."</i>

Using the TRIC model

- **Situation 1:** The employee consistently interrupts you and others, including customers, during meetings.
- **Situation 2:** The employee consistently forgets to fill out paperwork after completing a project, thus making the department database incomplete and not up-to-date.
- **Situation 3:** The employee is sticking doggedly to his flex schedule and leaving, even when coworkers and customers need his help.

Review the TRIC model in the workbook and then conduct the activity.

Activity: Use the TRIC model for conducting a quick coaching session. Divide participants into groups of three: One person will be the coach, another the employee, and the third will serve as observer. Use your own situation or one of the following to practice the TRIC model. The observer will give feedback to the coach, acknowledging what they did well and making suggestions for improvement. Rotate roles until all have had a chance to practice using the TRIC model.

Situation 1: The employee consistently interrupts you and others, including customers, during meetings.

Situation 2: The employee consistently forgets to fill out paperwork after completing a project, thus making the department database incomplete and not up-to-date.

Situation 3: The employee is sticking doggedly to their flex schedule and leaving, even when coworkers and customers need their help.

Information

Information in the workplace looks like:

- ◇ The use of language is inclusive (we, our, us)
- ◇ Listening is valued as much or more than telling
- ◇ People live their personal values
- ◇ Employees know what is expected of them
- ◇ Groups develop common values
- ◇ Differences are respected
- ◇ Information to do the job and about the big picture—goals and progress of the organization—is available and shared

Mediocre management vs. successful leadership

- ◇ The mediocre manager figures out what is wrong and tries to fix it. The successful leader figures out what's right and models it.
- ◇ The mediocre manager knows when someone is underperforming. The successful leader also finds out why someone is underperforming.
- ◇ The mediocre manager provides generic “go get 'em” motivation. The successful leader also targets a specific business result and coaches to achieve it.
- ◇ The mediocre manager undertakes goal setting as a once-a-year activity. The successful leader also uses constant measuring and monitoring skills to keep employees informed of their progress.
- ◇ The mediocre manager sets arbitrary performance standards or none at all. The successful leader also ties performance standards to business results.
- ◇ The mediocre manager has a “one size fits all” approach to incentives. The successful leader also provides meaningful incentives.

Information:

The underlying issues and needs are:

- The need to be in the information loop
- The need to receive feedback
- The need for self-knowledge and expression
- The need to be shown respect through honesty
- The fear of being rejected or disliked

Caution participants that we are not promoting that employees be included in every decision, know every detail, or make decisions out of their realm of their authority. However, in almost all situations employees with more information, authority, and feeling of inclusion are more productive, happy.

Ask participants to think of a nonperformer that they are currently working with and to star the concept that they believe this individual is most in need of in the workplace.

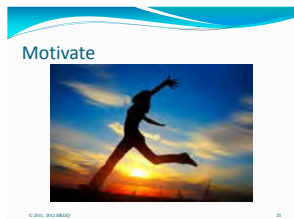
Review and discuss the aspects of a mediocre manager vs. a successful leader. Have the participants check off the areas in which they believe they are a successful leader and circle the areas where they feel that they could improve.

Caution

Employees do not need to be included in every decision, know every detail, or make decisions out of their realm of authority.

However, in almost all situations, employees with more information, authority, and feeling of inclusion are more productive and happy.

Read and discuss the steps to identifying motivators for each employee. Have participants read the list of common motivators and to fill it out for themselves. Have them choose their number-one motivator and, at the bottom of the page, write down a strategy that would help support that motivator for them. Have them read these aloud to the group and discuss how this approach would help in identifying and supporting their employees.



When participants return to the workplace have them use this list in the following way.

Fill out the list yourself for each of your employees and then have each of your employees fill out the list for themselves. Compare your answers to theirs. Recognize the differences between your impression of what you think is important to them and what they think is important to them. Then meet with each of your employees to discuss what they think are the most important motivational factors to them. Lastly, take some time alone to write down how you will modify your approaches with each employee to ensure their motivational factors are being met.

Identifying what your employees want the most

Steps to identify what motivates your employees

- ◇ Make of list of three to five things that motivate each of your employees.
- ◇ Work with each employee to ensure their motivational factors are taken into consideration in your reward systems.
- ◇ Schedule one-on-one meetings with all employees to discuss what motivates them and how you can support them.

Use this list of common motivators to begin a discussion with each employee.

- Career Development/Success
- Comfort/Relaxation
- Health/Balance/Energy
- Influence/Leadership
- Learning/Knowledge/Discovery
- Materials/Possessions
- Recognition/Praise
- Security/Money/Home
- Social/Affiliation/Popularity/Acceptance
- Status/Prestige/Stand Out/Reputation
- Task Accomplishment/Problem Solving/Achievement
- Teaching/Guiding Others
- Vitality/Energy
- Others? _____

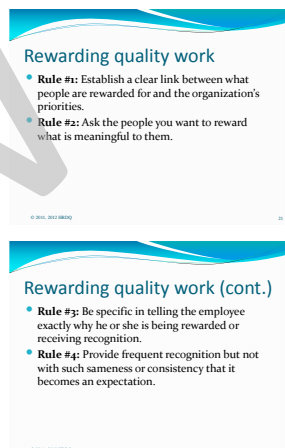
List a strategy that will support your number-one motivator.

Recognizing and rewarding quality work

- ◇ **Rule #1:** Establish a clear link between what people are rewarded for and the organization's priorities.
 - Example: Reduce absenteeism. Reward: Handwritten recognition for employees who have perfect attendance for the month and their name goes into a monthly drawing for a gift certificate.
- ◇ **Rule #2:** Ask the people you want to reward what is meaningful to them.
 - Public versus private praise
 - Tangible items versus intangible opportunities
- ◇ **Rule #3:** Be specific in telling the employee exactly why they are being rewarded/receiving recognition.
 - Less effective: "Nice job on the Elmer Project."
 - More effective: "The customer loved the layout of the report and has requested that we produce others for them."
- ◇ **Rule #4:** Provide frequent recognition but not with such sameness or consistency that it becomes an expectation.

Ideally, employees should see a connection between meeting or exceeding their personal goals and the organization's priorities and success.

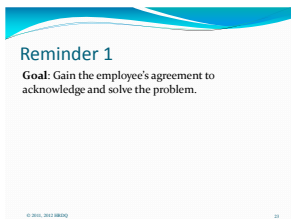
A study of incentive plans in 144 U.S. companies by consultant Towers Perrin concluded that plans with the highest levels of effectiveness also have the highest levels of employee involvement.



Recognition should be given as close to the event or behavior as possible.

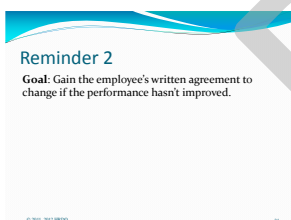
When recognition becomes an expectation or entitlement, it loses its effectiveness because it no longer makes the employee feel special. An example: A department manager provided lunch for her staff on Fridays to encourage team building and positive work relationships. All interested employees voluntarily attended the lunches. She was shocked when a group of employees asked to be reimbursed to cover the cost of the lunch on days they did not attend. The lunches had become an expected portion of their compensation and benefits. Sincere recognition had turned into entitlement.

Traditional discipline often calls this first step a “verbal warning.” However, for thorough documentation this “verbal warning” should be recorded in the employee’s file, thus becoming a written warning. So it’s easier and more clear to simply call it “Reminder 1” and the next will be “Reminder 2.” It also sounds less punitive to call it a “reminder” than a “warning.”



Step 1: The goal of Reminder 1 is to gain the employee’s agreement to acknowledge and solve the problem.

A written memo should repeat your conversation and confirm that the employee has received a first reminder about this particular issue. The memo stays in the manager’s file at this time; it doesn’t go into the employee’s official personnel file.



Step 2: The goal here is to gain the employee’s written agreement to change if the performance hasn’t improved.

A four-step process for running formal disciplinary session

Step 1: Reminder 1

Goal:

-
- ◇ Inform the employee about the problem, reiterate your past conversations, and state the fact that the problem is now in the formal disciplinary phase.
 - ◇ Remind the employee of their personal responsibility to meet established standards for performance and behavior.
 - ◇ Set guidelines for acceptable progress and solving the problem.
 - ◇ Clarify the consequences for noncompliance.
 - ◇ Send the employee a follow-up memo restating the discussion, commitments(s), actions, and guidelines.

Step 2: Reminder 2

Goal:

-
- ◇ Establish a written formal record in the employee’s personnel file documenting your efforts to date, and the employee’s failure to abide by previous commitments.
 - ◇ Identify and describe the continuing problem.
 - ◇ Restate the essentials of the desired performance or behavior and the employee’s obligation to meet it.
 - ◇ Focus on the employee’s failure to make agreed-upon changes.
 - ◇ Provide documentation with specific examples of the performance shortcoming or the effects of the behavior.
 - ◇ Prepare (with employee) a specific and detailed action plan for improvement, including consequences, good and bad.
 - ◇ Complete documentation by placing a copy of the notification and subsequent action plan in the employee’s personnel file.

Course review

1. List three obvious reasons for employee nonperformance.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

2. Which of the following are reasons to confront nonperformance problems early?

- a. Prevent slowdown
- b. Can focus on one behavior at a time
- c. Prevent lower levels of performance from becoming standard
- d. Avoid the “snowball effect” of small problems becoming major disciplinary issues
- e. All of the above

3. When creating clear documentation of problem employees, you should always document the _____ that show you acted fairly and properly.

4. Which of the following is not included as one of the four reasons for poor performance?

- Don't know
- Can't do
- Isn't allowed
- Doesn't care
- Won't do

5. T or F Employees respond to expectations by adjusting their behavior to match them.

1.

- 1) Unclear expectations
- 2) Insufficient resources
- 3) Inadequate feedback

2. e

3. facts

4. d

5. T

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