



August 2010 - Leadership Letter (52)

Our old office number is no longer in service ... our new phone number is ... 513/919-7672. If you haven't already, please make a note of this change. Thanks!

GOAL-SETTING, EXPECTATIONS, COACHING, AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

For about 45 years I've been trying to understand these topics ... every now and again, a little bit of daylight pops through.

This past year, we've been assisting three good clients to strengthen their performance review and improvement processes. So I've been revisiting my own collection of learnings, tools, processes, etc.

It seems to me that, in many firms, the effort and emphasis is all on annual performance reviews (often "required" by procedures), with too little attention to **goal-setting, expectations, and coaching**.

So **this** leadership letter will focus mostly on those three often neglected aspects of leadership and management. The emphasis is on **improving performance**.

In a future letter, I'll highlight some of the best approaches clients are taking toward performance reviews/appraisals.

I hope you find something here that's helpful!

Best wishes,

Mel

Mel Hensey, PE, F.ASCE
Management Consulting Engineer
Hensey Associates
8220 Riversedge Cir., Maineville, OH 45039
513/919-7672, MHensey@aol.com

Don't forget that all past **Leadership Letters** can be found on our website at www.henseyassociates.com.

GOAL-SETTING, EXPECTATIONS, COACHING, AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

People from all walks of life have been proven to be significantly **more successful** in their lives when they have regularly set goals for themselves. (And managers can help provide the opportunity and interest.)

—Long-term Study by Harvard University

Great performers, whether athletes, musicians, managers, or entrepreneurs have and use **coaches** and the wisdom of others wherever they can find it. (And managers are in the ideal situation to be/become good coaches.)

—Jim Collins and Warren Bennis

Managers should provide lots of opportunities for training and development for their people and **skip** performance reviews, as they are **not** usually constructive **the way management handles them.**

—Edwards Deming, American Quality Pioneer

Americans generally hate to be evaluated or measured or rated. However, they love to have **goals**, and to know **how well** they're succeeding at them.

—Larry Miller; *American Spirit*

The best way to motivate your people is to “manage by objectives,” objectives that are **jointly** set by the employee and manager. More than three objectives is the same as no objectives.

—Peter Drucker; *The Practice of Management*

Knowledge workers and skilled craftsmen appreciate clear roles and goals, and the autonomy to use their own creativity and manage their own work. When that's the case, their **work itself** is motivating.

—Frederick Herzberg and Abraham Maslow

Providing **honest and helpful** feedback is one of the three most difficult tasks of leaders and managers. Some can be honest; some can be helpful; very few can do both well. Yet both are needed.

—David Thompson; *Managing People, Influencing Behavior*

Associates come in a variety of types, styles and motivations. Managers are inherently good at some tasks; poor in others. For performance coaching to be productive, managers must understand **themselves, their associates and motivation.**

—Isabel Briggs Myers and Ichak Adizes

Many of us have been "educated" since childhood to find fault rather than to find the positives in people. This can be very dysfunctional.

Reinforcement (of things done well) may be the strongest tool most managers have to change associates' behaviors. And the most underutilized. When reinforcement is available and used, most people will stop or change behaviors that are not reinforced.

—David Thompson

Coaching for Change: When reviewing performance and identifying **needed changes** in worker behaviors, success is more likely if you ...

- focus on **one** change that is urgent and important.
- show the **connection** to the customer and the mission.
- identify the **results** of doing it poorly and well.
- coach on **technique** if needed, then and later.
- show **confidence** in their future performance.

The **Pygmalion Effect** is related to reinforcement and coaching. In the play *Pygmalion*, a cockney flower girl (Eliza) is turned into a duchess, because of the positive expectations of her mentor! To create/use this human behavior shaping model, one must ...

- **believe** in the individual's worth and potential, and **let it show.**
- give lots of specific, positive and frequent feedback on things done **well, especially** when they are new things or improvements.
- Offer tips on **learning**, in manageable chunks.
- **express confidence** for the future with sincerity and feeling.

See the following page for more insight into the Pygmalion Effect, provided in an excellent summary by Susan Heathfield!



Mel Hensey, PE, Management Consulting Engineer
Hensey Associates, MHensey@aol.com

www.henseyassociates.com

August 2010

The Pygmalion Effect: The Power of the Supervisor's Expectations

By [Susan M. Heathfield](#), About.com Guide

Your expectations of people and their expectations of themselves are the key factors in how well people perform at work. Known as the Pygmalion effect and the Galatea effect, respectively, the power of expectations cannot be overestimated. These are the fundamental principles you can apply to performance expectations and potential performance improvement at work.

You can summarize the Pygmalion effect, often known as the power of expectations, by considering:

- Every supervisor has expectations of the people who report to him.
- Supervisors communicate these expectations consciously or unconsciously.
- People pick up on, or consciously or unconsciously read, these expectations from their supervisor.
- People perform in ways that are consistent with the expectations they have picked up on from the supervisor.

The Pygmalion effect was described by J. Sterling Livingston in the September/October, 1988 *Harvard Business Review*. "The way managers treat their subordinates is subtly influenced by what they expect of them," Livingston said in his article, *Pygmalion in Management*.

The Pygmalion effect enables staff to excel in response to the manager's message that they are capable of success and expected to succeed. The Pygmalion effect can also undermine staff performance when the subtle communication from the manager tells them the opposite. These cues are often subtle. As an example, the supervisor fails to praise a staff person's performance as frequently as he praises others. The supervisor talks less to a particular employee.

Livingston went on to say about the supervisor, "If he is unskilled, he leaves scars on the careers of the young men (and women), cuts deeply into their self-esteem and distorts their image of themselves as human beings. But if he is skillful and has high expectations of his subordinates, their self-confidence will grow, their capabilities will develop and their productivity will be high. More often than he realizes, the manager is Pygmalion."

Can you imagine how performance will improve if your supervisors communicate positive thoughts about people to people? If the supervisor actually believes that every employee has the ability to make a positive contribution at work, the telegraphing of that message, either consciously or unconsciously, will positively affect employee performance.

And, the effect of the supervisor gets even better than this. When the supervisor holds positive expectations about people, she helps individuals improve their self-concept and thus, self-esteem. People believe they can succeed and contribute and their performance rises to the level of their own expectations.