

FEATURE ARTICLE: MESSAGE BOARD October 2009

Being Stretched: are we up for what it takes? Pt. 3

The modern work performance system has one goal; to develop the human skills, knowledge and resources within a company. However, there is little evidence that work performance is actually improved and more tragically, work morale is negatively impacted. Poor attitudes towards performance improvement by both workers and managements via the *Performance Review* process are making the above goal more difficult. The individual who brings their past 'baggage' to the Review is reactive; as illustrated in Part one of this article. Conversely, when we are willing to see our 'baggage' and have the intention to extend ourselves with good will, then personal development happens more easily.

Likewise, where a company lives out fundamental attitudes that support personal growth and development then performance feedback is more effective. Part Two of this article suggested that it was important for companies to actively focus on creating environments where two-way conversations were possible, where listening and speaking openly was the norm.

In many organisations, Managers silently wish employees would take the initiative in performance and personal growth. Alongside this position, the employee may wish things would change, and that Management would 'fix' the problems. Here we have the heart of what needs to change. The elephant in the room is *fear*.

Fear of:

- Being misunderstood
- The reactions of others
- That we will not be able to find the inner resources to meet the relationship challenges that can and do arise
- Taking the first step on the journey: learning new ways of relating (inertia being such a compelling force)
- Being seen as weak

Distracting silence

Most of us have seen people who have grown and developed as human beings, with the resultant high levels of performance and personal satisfaction. In *As Good as it Gets*, we see the complexities of human relationships and the possibilities for growth. Helen Hunt's character, Carol, demands that Melvin (an obsessive-compulsive played by Jack Nicholson) compliment her. An awkward silence ensues, before he replies "You make me want to be a better man."

Likewise, in every organisation there is the opportunity to create a culture where people want to be better human beings: more skilled and knowledgeable, able to expand their capacity to contribute to the world.

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Fear and personal performance are intimately linked. Companies who understand this powerful state of mind at play find ways to prevent the corrosive influence of fear. Moreover, when they provide a compelling vision of the best in human beings, they are in tandem developing people's capabilities and potential.

Actions from a compelling expectation

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Part 4 will focus on what systems would assist people in the workplace to fear less and support their own and others potential.

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WE ARE WHAT WE DO

When we speak or think of fear, our automatic reaction is usually to deny our fearfulness (at least, I do - I just don't want to know that I fear the situation that I am presented with). In fact, I almost prefer to acknowledge anxiety, rather than admit to the feeling of fear!

Let's be honest, fear leaves people with terrible feelings: helplessness, dread, panic and a variety of other debilitating emotions. Fear has such an emotional toll on our whole being. Our minds are paralysed, our physical body reacts with palpitations and other manifestations associated with the perceived crisis. Our illusion that we are in control is fractured.

And I hear myself say "Fear is just a thought". The fact is, I don't believe this limp response because my whole being is telling me different. This is the paradox. I have an expectation that something is going to happen, something is wrong - and I don't believe that the expectation comes from my own mind. It feels real - the power of illusion - the power of thought to create our personal reality!

In my fear, I realise that I am asked to stretch myself by:

- Being open to the feelings, without any self-judgement
- Allowing the fear, but not wallowing in it
- Taking action, even small actions, to change What Is.

Until next time... David

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