The Five Reasons Why Your People Disappoint You
by
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The bank's CEO was visibly agitated as we sat down for our monthly update. "We're not meeting our numbers. Not even close. I made myself more accessible as you suggested – at a cost to my own productivity – and it's been a constant stream of questions, complaints about silly things, demands for 'I need this, and I need that!' And the squabbles…the politics are just getting worse. Doc, they just don't seem to get it!" he exclaimed.

"I asked you to be more than just 'accessible', Bill. What are you *hearing*?" I asked.

"Joe and Sam (VP's of sales) seem to be going after prospects in markets we can't possibly serve. We're closing deals, but the paperwork gets impossibly tangled and disconnected from the process I set up. Jim (the VP for their IT system) blames the software. Karen (VP of branch operations) blames Jim for his lousy training. And get this…Monika (marketing director) decided that *purple* was a better background color for the logo than the dark green it's been since day one. She put it on everything – web site, brochures, everything. When I asked her why, she said she just thinks purple *looks* better. We're a bank! Green is the color of money. Unbelievable…" he lamented looking down at his desk and shaking his head from side to side.

"Ok, let's take it from the top" I said as I walked over to his white board. "We talked about the 'Five Reasons Your People Disappoint You' last month. I'm going to write them down this time, and we'll dissect each one until we see the fundamental issues and come up with strategies to lead the team out of this quagmire." I began writing…

#1 – THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO. You *think* you've made things clear, but obviously they don't *really* know what you expect from each of them. Are goals and objectives crystal clear to the entire management team? Do you have buy-in and commitment to work together to meet them? My guess is…not so much.

#2 – THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO IT. Sure, *you've* set up some systems, but clearly, they lack the knowledge and skills to pull it off. For openers, looks to me like we need to re-visit all training program content and process.

#3 – THEY DON'T HAVE THE TOOLS TO DO IT. Jim may be right…technology is constantly changing and critical for any business today. When's the last time you did a thorough audit of your 'tools of the trade'? Don't forget that printed materials – manuals, forms, reference lists, etc. are very important elements of the tool box as well.

#4 – THEY DON'T CARE. Unlike looking at 'things', understanding the reasons for poor motivation are far more complex. The causes can range from weak person-job fit, to toxic relationships, to a negative culture, and plain bad management. Solving this problem takes time and the willingness to candidly examine many sources of apathy at the group and individual level.

#5 – THEY ARE INCOMPETENT. However it occurred, when we put a person into a job they do not have the knowledge, skills or ability (KSAs) to adequately perform, it is management's fault. Period. We need to examine how this is occurring and develop recruitment, hiring, and on-boarding systems that put the right people in the right job at the right time.

Bill is certainly not unique in his inability to see the forces that frustrate top performance. I haven't met a CEO or a business owner, including myself, who has not had to take a careful look at the 'Five Reasons' from time-to-time and quickly find solutions to get individuals and teams back on track to achieve their true potential. The good news is that solutions to these five problems are easier than one might think – with commitment, candor, and a willingness to do things differently.