

Guideline for Improved Personal Performance

For many years now I have been asked such questions as, "What is the secret to managerial success?" or, "What is your advice to enable me to do my job better?" My answers have been pretty much the same throughout this period, because I think that sticking to some simple basic principles makes good sense. I call these my "guidelines for improved personal performance," and I'd like to share them with you.

1. *The first is to suggest that you really take the time to understand exactly what your job is and how your performance is going to be measured.*

Now that may seem pretty basic. But, you'd be amazed if you'd go around, and talk to people, and I say, "What are you supposed to do?" and the person won't respond for a little while, and then they'll say, "You know, I'm not really sure about all the things I'm supposed to do." Well, I'll submit to you that if you are not really sure what your job is, you really ought to take the steps to find out. And, if your boss can't tell you and his boss can't tell you, somebody should. It is extremely important in business that we know what we are supposed to do and what's expected of us. How in the world can we be expected to do a good job if that doesn't exist?

I used to tell a story in some talks that I gave years ago that was told to me by a management consultant about this particular concept. He told it in a rather humorous way about how he had been called to consult at a particular company. The president of the company had five different division heads and said, "You know, while most of my divisions are going pretty good, I've got this one...the guy just doesn't seem to understand. When I want him to go right, he goes left. When I want him to go up, he goes down. When I want him to stand, he sits. When I want him to sit, he stands. I think the guy's got an IQ of 70. Unbelievable. Maybe you can help him."

The consultant asked the president, "What is the guy supposed to do?" And the president replied, "Well, hell, he's supposed to do his job. I've got it all down. I keep it right here in my desk. I've got ten things I want him to do and he doesn't even seem to know how to do any of them."

The consultant said, "Maybe if I could see that list it would help me to visit him and figure out what's wrong." The president said, "Here, you can have it."

So he gave him the list, and the consultant went down to see this manager number five, and as the consultant described him, he seemed aggressive, hard working, energetic, intelligent.

But, he was confused. And the consultant asked him, "What's troubling you." and he replied, "I don't know; I guess it's my boss. I never seem to be able to do what he wants. I go right and he wants me to go left, etc. I'm really getting discouraged.

So, the consultant said, "You know, I was talking to your boss about that and he gave me a sheet of paper that had ten things down on it that he wanted you to do." The manager said, "Really? Have you got that piece of paper with you?" The consultant replied, "Oh, yes I do. It's right here in my pocket." The manager said, "You think I could see it?" And the consultant replied, "Well, now, I'm a man of great integrity and I couldn't do a thing like that." And the manager said, "Do you drink coffee?" And the consultant said, "Yes." And the manager said, "Well, perhaps if you just kind of left it here...I'll give you a dime for the cup of coffee if you'd go down the hall and get it. I've got a copy machine around the corner, so maybe I'll..."

So he did. The consultant went and got a cup of coffee, came back, and he thought, "The paper is kind of hot; it probably went through the copy machine."

About six months later, the president of the company called the consultant and said, "Look, I don't really have too big a budget, but if you could come back here and do for my other four managers what you did for number five, I'd be forever pleased. It's unbelievable what has happened. The guy goes right when I want him to go right, he goes left when I want him to go left. I think his IQ has gone up 150 percent. It's incredible! You're a genius!" The consultant replied to the president, "Well, sir, I'm happy to hear that you are happy but I've got a confession to make. Remember that piece of paper that you gave me that had those ten things down on it that you wanted him to do?" The president said, "Yes?" The consultant said, "Well, sir, I gave it to number five."

There was a long pause...and the president came back on the line and said, "I knew it, that son of a gun cheated!"

There is a real message here, because, in fact, I don't think any business can run very long unless people know what their job is and know what's expected of them. Many of you are both subordinates and bosses, and I think that in your role as a boss, it is incumbent upon you to make sure that, with the people that work for you, you have that kind

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of understanding. Beyond that, there should be clear communication as to how you are going to be evaluated. Otherwise, it's a big guessing game.

As a subordinate, you should ensure that your boss is doing that for you by showing him or her that this is how you are going to be able to deliver to the company the superior performance it desires. And I encourage each and every one of you to keep that in mind as you go about your jobs, whatever you are going, because without it, we are simply running around in the dark like ships passing in the night. Occasionally, we'll respond to each other very, very well, but otherwise we'll be playing a guessing game.

2. *The second thing that I would encourage each of you to do is to establish some specific performance goals and, more importantly, develop a work plan of some sort to achieve them.*

Do not try to do your jobs by playing it by ear or adlibbing it on a day-to-day basis. The problem with this approach is that you never have a reference point to gauge your progress, and I defy anybody, over a period of time, to measure how they are going without a good reference point.

A good work plan, and this is something that I am trying to encourage everyone throughout this company to use, whether it is a budget or a plan of action, or an evaluation technique or whatever it might be, is a fundamental management tool that I don't think we can do without. And, I would encourage each and every one of you to not only develop that work plan in conjunction with the goals

that you both want to achieve personally and with the performance of your job, but then learn to measure yourself effectively and efficiently on a continuing basis against it.

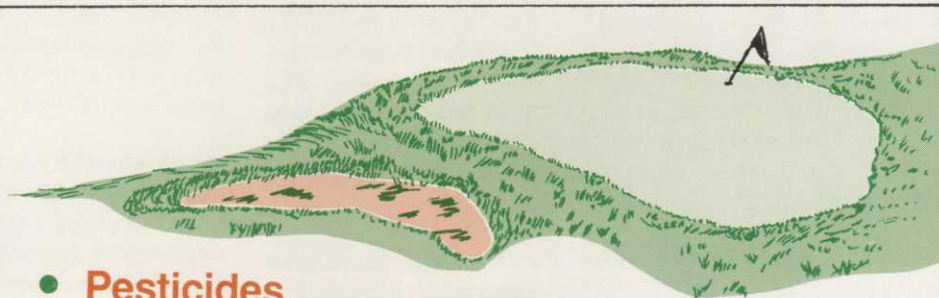
Those of you who achieve more senior management responsibilities will realize that increasingly, as time goes by, it's going to be incumbent upon you to measure yourself rather than depend upon someone else to measure you. And, I think that if you want to be an outstanding performer and take advantage of the opportunities that are truly going to be available for you - you need to acquire that skill.

3. *The third thing is a more practical bit of advice: that is, if you are not comfortable with them, or if you don't think you know too much about them, learn to know how to work with numbers.*

Numbers are the fundamental measuring tool of any business. We have all kinds of subjective things we try to measure ourselves with: how well our customers feel about us, and so forth and so on; but, fundamentally, all business is financially based and the way that you evaluate it financially is with numbers.

Numbers aren't a big scary thing but, some people, unfortunately, become frightened with them. Learn how to work with numbers. Learn how to make them work for you. Develop yourself in at least that particular skill so that you don't find yourself falling behind because of an

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inability or inhibition about dealing with numbers. Just a bit of practical advice that I really encourage you to follow.

4. Be honest, always. You cannot assume that you will always be right.

The fact is, that if the basis upon which you go about your day-to-day activities is one in which you are being honest with yourself, honest with your co-workers, and honest with your customers, you can make mistakes, you can be off on the wrong track or tangent, and you don't really have to worry too much about it because, I think, you will ultimately find your way back to the right place and the right direction, and you will not have sacrificed anything in the process.

I really feel that the most important characteristic that I have seen over the years in Mr. Turf is his extraordinary level of integrity. I have never met such a fair man in my entire life. And I honestly feel that, in large measure, honesty is characterized by our management team. In order to reinforce that, however, I would like to encourage each and every one of you to promulgate that feeling as you go about your jobs.

Besides the obvious business value of this approach, it should be important to you personally as well. You should not be in business to fool people. You should not be in business to be clever. You should not be trying to accomplish schemes. You should simply be a person who has a job to do and who is trying to go out and do it in the best way you can, and then let the results be evaluated as they may.

I think it is vitally, vitally important that honesty and integrity must be the foundation of all our work efforts. I do not want gamesmanship to appear in this company. The potential for that exists, particularly as the business gets larger. But, if we all focus on it and work on it as hard as we possibly can, it either won't exist, or it will be kept to an absolute minimum.

5. Treat everyone with whom you come in contact with dignity and respect, be they fellow employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or your personal friends.

The thing that hurts me the most is when, for one reason or another, we become aggravated by something and take out that aggravation on someone else, even if that person is the one that is the cause of it all, I would rather have them live with the guilt of not having treated me or us with dignity and respect, than us have to carry that burden. Sometimes you have to bite your tongue awfully hard, or grit your teeth, or dig your nails into the palm of your hand, but I submit to you that if you can maintain that posture with people with whom you come in contact, you will feel really superior for having done so, and you will have commanded a degree of respect that will carry you a long, long way in whatever difficulties you might be having.

I've often counseled people who have to dismiss someone from our employment. If you do it right, that per-

son will thank you for having done it. Because, if you have dealt with them, and treated them with dignity and respect, they will recognize that what you are trying to do is in their best interest.

I truly encourage you to keep dignity and respect for others, and dedication to respect and honesty uppermost in your mind as you go about your daily job and your daily life.

6. Finally, I want to make sure that you take time from your working life for your personal life.

This is a high-powered business; we move fast, we move hard. Some harder than others. This business will make demands upon you. For the most part, I think that the trait that characterizes our employee group and our management team is conscientiousness. I look for that almost more than any other thing in seeking to employ people. I want individuals who care, who want to work hard, who have a high standard, and want to live up to it.

The drawback to these traits is that frequently those individuals begin to make sacrifices that they shouldn't make for their jobs. I'm not suggesting that you go to work tomorrow and dog it, or take the day off, but I am suggesting that you not allow your work to become so totally consuming that you do not take the necessary time out for your personal life.

You should take time to diversify your interests, you should take time for others who are very close to you. Don't make the mistake of overlooking this, because you will really live to regret it. We really only go through this process once, and I would encourage you to try as much as you can to make it a balanced process, so that as you conclude it, you feel good about all of the elements that were a part of it.

Work should be, and can be a lot of fun. Your personal lives should be and can be a lot of fun, and the proper blend of all that is really a superior level of satisfaction and enjoyment. I would encourage you to work very hard to try to accomplish that.

There is a lot of other advice one might provide in this vein, but I think these six points provide the necessary practical, philosophical, and psychological basis for seeking career success. I hope they are of value to you and to those with whom you live and work.■

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