

WORK THOUGHTS

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Food for Thought: *What a Performance!*

For many people, the concepts of performance and behavior are confusing. Are you clear about the difference? Whether it is the final football score, the grades on the first report card, or the monetary success of a new product line, what we have in the end is *performance*, the end result of a long line of behaviors. *Behaviors*, on the other hand, are all the actions that contribute to performance.

One way to separate *performance* from *behavior* is to remember that performance is often a noun and behaviors are usually verbs. In the game of golf, for example, *performance* is the score, but selecting the best club, taking a practice swing, following through on a long putt, and hitting out of a sand trap are all *behaviors*. Golfers can hit practice balls for hours, but when everyone goes to the club house, the talk is not about hitting practice balls. No, club house talk is all about performance, the number on the score card at the end of a round of golf.

People who evaluate employee performance, however, sometimes mistakenly reward behavior rather than performance. He is such a great guy to work with! Yes, an employee may work long hours and appear to be busy and productive, even to the point of winning a promotion. Nevertheless, when promotions are granted based on behaviors alone, and not on actual performance, the entire organization suffers. In work settings where this happens routinely, we can expect to see less productivity, lower morale, and marginalized cooperation from employees.

Consider also the school setting. As high school graduates leave for their freshman year in college, many parents realize that they, the parents, have not sufficiently modeled and taught their soon-to-be independent offspring the specific *behaviors* that will result in the *performance* the parents expect. In fact, the majority of adolescents enter college without knowing, of fully comprehending, the behaviors that will help them perform well.

Those who study productivity agree that many performance problems do originate from lack of information. Industry analysts, for example, have discovered that most often the major causes of poor performance are basic-- no established standards, no communication about desired results, and no specific feedback about how well people are doing right now.

In the end, it is actually easy to realize the value of Monday night football! We know the standards; we have been told which team is expected to win; and the commentators and stadium audience are sure to let us know how well or poorly our team is _____ (would you say *playing* or *performing*?).

To learn more about rewarding employee *performance* and increasing productivity, call us a 337-436-9533.



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