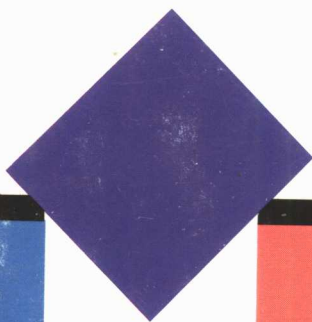


WHY EMPLOYEES DON'T DO WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO



**AND WHAT
TO DO
ABOUT IT**

Ferdinand F. Fournies

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Introduction

AS YOU KNOW, MOST PEOPLE AT WORK DO MOST OF WHAT THEY ARE supposed to do most of the time. They are cooperative, hard-working, and dependable. Some employees do even more than they are supposed to do: they arrive early and stay late; they are nice to have around. But there are those few bad performers who don't seem to do anything right. Unfortunately, there are also those occasions when even the good performers do it wrong or not at all. Have you ever asked yourself, "Why don't they do what they are supposed to do?" Don't feel bad if you didn't get a good answer; most managers are unable to answer that question.

A similar, but larger question, "Why does man do what he does?" has been the burning question for philosophers, poets, and scientists down through the ages. Psychologists have offered many theories as possible answers to that question, but in some instances, their answers are not answers at all. For example, you have probably heard that man does what he does because he is motivated to do it; the motivation is the reason. Unfortunately, psychologists don't agree with each other on what motivation is, or how it operates. Some psychologists believe that motivation must always come from within the person, while other psychologists believe that motivation must come from outside the person. Both appear to pre-

sent equally convincing evidence for their side of this ongoing argument.

Unfortunately, the nuances of this debate are useless to the manager who is trying to get people to produce a quality product or perform a quality service within the constraints of time, cost, and safety. The literature on motivation is confusing to managers searching for a practical answer to the question, “How do *I* motivate *my* people?”

In my consulting company, which services clients in industries around the world, we are continuously searching for the answer to that same question because companies pay for the answers. A client company wants to be told how to increase sales, or how to improve product or service quality. If the answers we give as solutions are ineffective, we don’t get paid.

Unfortunately, our organization’s review of the psychological literature has led us, like many others, to conclude that motivation is a difficult thing to describe, much less measure. It seems that motivation is a term invented to describe “what we don’t know” is causing people to do what they do. Because psychologists have difficulty describing specifically why people do what they do, individual managers have much less chance of success in coming up with a workable answer.

Somewhat frustrated, we asked ourselves, “If we can’t make up a specific list of why employees do what they do, perhaps we could try a different approach and discover why employees *don’t* do what they are supposed to do.” So, about fifteen years ago we started asking managers in our management seminars, “Why don’t your subordinates do what they are supposed to do?” Their answers at first were not very helpful because they were not specific. One common answer was, “Because they are not motivated.” When we wrote that down and asked, “Why aren’t they motivated?” the response was, “They don’t want to do it.” When we wrote that down and asked, “Why don’t they want to do it?”, they would answer, “They are not motivated.” So, around in circles we went.

As time went on, we asked better questions. For example, we asked, “Why don’t people want to do it, and the answer can’t be that they are not motivated?” Managers responded with a lot of different answers, such as, “They don’t know why they should do

it,” or “They think it will not work,” or “They don’t care.” The list of answers got longer.

After doing that for about five years, we noticed something very interesting; the answers didn’t change. Although occasionally the answers came out in a different sequence, the completed lists were similar. We also noticed that whether we were talking to corporate presidents or first-line supervisors, the same reasons were given. For example, the answer, “They think their way is better,” was given as a reason for nonperformance by managers of janitors, computer programmers, and vice presidents. After working with this list for another few years, we noticed something even more interesting: almost all of these reasons for nonperformance were controlled by the manager. We also realized that there were two general management causes for most of these reasons for nonperformance:

- a. The manager did something wrong to or for the employees, or
- b. The manager failed to do something right to or for the employees.

In other words, employee nonperformance occurred because of poor management. What followed was the startling realization that if managers took appropriate action to make these reasons for nonperformance go away or prevent them from occurring in the first place, the result would be appropriate performance.

Our fifteen-year study of reasons for poor performance with more than 20,000 managers has revealed that there are specific, effective management interventions any manager can use to prevent almost all of those reasons why people don’t do what they are supposed to do at work. This is in contrast to the never-ending search for the secret button to push to get people motivated. We found that many managers were already using these interventions effectively without knowing they were doing something special. But when we brought it to their attention, they got better at it. The overwhelming conclusion is that management is an intervention more like bridge building than rain dancing: there is a direct cause-effect relationship between a manager’s actions and an employee’s performance.

The objective of this book is to tell you how to get all of your people doing what they are supposed to be doing all of the time. You will learn all of those reasons we discovered why employees don't do what they are supposed to do. You will also learn the specific interventions you can take to prevent those reasons from occurring, thereby increasing efficiency. We will not deal with all of the problems you have in managing people. We will deal only with those reasons that influence their performance.

If all you are doing now is hiring the best people and putting them on the job with minimum management and you are satisfied with their performance, don't bother reading this book. If, however, you think performance should be improved and you are willing to try to improve it, please continue reading.

The emphasis of this book is on preventive management using proactive interventions to prevent problems from occurring *vs.* problem management reacting to solve problems after they occur. My objective is to help you to manage your employee's performance so that fewer performance problems occur, especially when problems are expensive. Each chapter focuses on a single reason for nonperformance. Each reason, in its various disguises, will be presented first, followed by the preventive solutions (the actions you can take to prevent that nonperformance from occurring).

I wish you good management.

Contents

Introduction viii

**Part I The Hidden Reasons
for Employee Nonperformance** 1

- 1 They Don't Know Why They Should Do It** 3
They Don't Seem to Care Because They Don't Know Why They Should—
Give Them the Big Picture and Make it Personal
- 2 They Don't Know How To Do It** 9
Telling Is Not Teaching and Assuming They Know Costs You Money—
How to Make Sure They Know How to Do It
- 3 They Don't Know What They Are Supposed To Do** 13
Strange But True, We Pay Them To Do A Lot Of Guessing—The Easiest
Way To Improve Performance—Let Them Know
- 4 They Think Your Way Will Not Work** 20
Getting People To Change Is A Big Problem—How To Sell Them; Not
Just Tell Them
- 5 They Think Their Way Is Better** 23
Smart People Sometimes Think The Wrong Things—The Good and Bad
of Innovation—How To Avoid Inventing Failure

- 6 They Think Something Else Is More Important 28**
Working On The Wrong Things Is Expensive—How To Make Sure They Know The Priorities
- 7 There Is No Positive Consequence to Them for Doing It 32**
People Are Moved By Rewards But Managers Don't Use Them Enough—Understanding How Rewards Work—How To Use the Cheapest and the Best To Maintain Performance
- 8 They Think They Are Doing It 38**
After They've Done It Wrong It Is Too Late To Tell Them—How To Use Feedback To Prevent Failures
- 9 They Are Rewarded for Not Doing It 44**
Managers Do It and Don't Know It—How To Change Your Approach
- 10 They Are Punished for Doing What They Are Supposed To Do 48**
Managers Don't Mean to Do It But They Do—Understanding the Employees' View Of Punishment—How To Remove Punishment Or Compensate For It
- 11 They Anticipate a Negative Consequence for Doing It 54**
The Problem Of Fear—How To Understand Their Expectations—How To Send the Right Message
- 12 There Is No Negative Consequence to Them for Poor Performance 58**
Why Managers Don't Take Corrective Actions—What To Do Before Progressive Discipline—Helping the Bad Performers Improve
- 13 Obstacles Beyond Their Control 63**
Ignoring Obstacles Will Not Make Them Go Away—Your Role in Helping Remove Obstacles
- 14 Their Personal Limits Prevent Them from Performing 69**
Managers' Confusion About People's Limitations—Avoiding the Wrong Label—How To Cope With Permanent and Temporary Limits

15 Personal Problems 75

The Difference Between Personal Problems and Manager's Problems—
How to Limit Personal Problems From Causing Performance Problems

16 No One Could Do It 82

Managers' Misunderstanding of the Problem—Knowing the Limited
Alternatives

**Part II A New Management Approach
That Gets You the Best Results 85**

**17 Use Preventive Management
To Maintain Good Performance 87**

Management Is an Intervention—Using Performance Maintenance To
Improve Performance—The Importance of Friendliness

18 Questions and Answers 97

Endnotes 104

Index 105

Part I
The
Hidden Reasons
for Employee
Nonperformance

They Don't Know Why They Should Do It

OF ALL THE REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE NONPERFORMANCE, "THEY don't know why they should do it" is the easiest for managers to accept because it is so logical without explanation. Almost any book, article, or lecture instructing managers how to motivate employees stresses the importance of "knowing why." In these modern days of management, you hardly ever hear managers say, "Don't worry about why, just do it," or "We don't have the time to sit around answering all of your questions, just go do what you get paid to do," or "Can you ever do anything without questioning my judgment?" Only dumb managers would say that. Enlightened managers know that it is all right for employees to ask "Why?" Unfortunately, not enough managers make the effort to answer that question before it is asked. As a result, employees fail because they don't know why they should do it.

THE PROBLEM

Managers usually describe the reason for nonperformance in different ways:

- They don't think it is important
- They think it is not worth the effort
- They don't want to do it

4 WHY EMPLOYEES DON'T DO WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO

- They don't have a reason for doing it
- They say, "Why, should I do that?"
- They don't care

A typical discussion with managers searching for more specific information goes like this:

- Me : "Why don't employees do what they are supposed to do?"
- Manager : "They don't care."
- Me : "Don't care about what?"
- Manager : "Don't care about doing it."
- Me : "Why don't they care about doing it?"
- Manager : "They don't know how important it is."
- Me : "What do you mean?"
- Manager : "They don't realize how others are affected by what they do."
- Me : "You mean they don't know why they should do it."
- Manager : "Right."

This discussion illustrates the need to be more specific when describing employee performance. The expression "they don't care" could mean employees are "not taking care," which means they are not working carefully, not following the correct procedure, or even abusing their equipment or customers—that is, they are not doing it correctly. Or the expression could just mean employees don't "have a care," which means their thoughts about doing it are not related to the importance of doing it—that is, doing it right or wrong appears to be of no importance to them. The latter person is who we are talking about in this problem situation. Employees with this problem might have been told they should do something, and they might have been told it is important, but they don't know why it is important.

This information about why a specific task or project is important falls into two categories. The first category includes the benefit to the organization for doing a task right, as well as the harm to the organization for doing it wrong. The second category includes the benefits to the employees for doing a task right, as well as the harm to the employees for doing it wrong. The first category deals with

why the task should be done; the second category deals with why that employee should do it. If your employees do not know the consequences in both of these categories, you might face nonperformance because they don't know why they should do it.

These two categories are not of equal importance to everyone however. For example, a performer's concern about his error, which will cost the organization \$100, is quite different from his concern about the same error when he discovers the \$100 will come out of his paycheck.

Frequently in business people are required to do things a certain way for reasons that are very clear to managers but are not so clear to employees. Here are some examples for the first category:

- My boss is really weird. She gets aggravated when you don't grab the phone as soon as it rings.
—(The reason the telephone should be answered within two rings is because we want to create the image of effective service to our customers.)
- I would rather make notes after the experiment is finished. Why does everything have to be done her way?
—(The reason you should make detailed laboratory notes as your experiment progresses is to produce more accurate notes to provide a basis for tracking down errors, as well as to meet the legal requirements.)
- I don't use sales aids because they cramp my style; besides I don't need them.
—(One reason you should use sales aids in your sales presentations is to involve more of the customers' senses, such as sight and touch, in addition to sound.)
- I think it is a waste of time saving all that scrap.
—(The reason the scrap should be saved is because it can be melted down and used again.)
- He makes a big deal about smoking in the laboratory because he is probably a reformed smoker.
—(The reason for not smoking when oxygen is being used is to prevent an explosion because oxygen is highly flammable.)
- Putting an extra piece of cardboard into the top of the box is a waste of time and materials.

6 WHY EMPLOYEES DON'T DO WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO

—(The reason for putting the extra piece of cardboard in the top of the box is to prevent the customers from damaging the product when they open the carton with a knife.)

- It seems to me that submitting my expense reports late would save the company money.

—(The reason for submitting your expense report on time is so the accountants can track cash flow more accurately.)

The reasons might seem obvious as you read this, but in these real situations, they were not obvious to the employees.

Under the second category, “why that employee should do it,” the reasons are quite different:

- To get a good performance rating
- To get paid
- To get a raise
- To get an award
- To learn something
- To get a promotion
- To get a choice assignment
- To get recognition
- To avoid embarrassment
- To prevent the pay from stopping
- To avoid a reprimand
- To avoid a demotion
- To avoid termination

You can see that employees who do not understand these reasons for doing a task could, from their point of view, have logical reasons to not do it.

PREVENTIVE SOLUTION

People will do things because you tell them they should do them only as long as you watch them. But you can't and shouldn't have to watch employees all of the time. The reason for doing things must be important enough to employees to influence their choices of how to perform when the boss is not watching.

Some automobile drivers will not wear seat belts to save their

own lives. These drivers start wearing seat belts, however, after their family convinces them that they are recklessly taking chances to deny the family of their presence unnecessarily. There are drug addicts and alcoholics who do not take steps to overcome their addiction for their own personal health, but subsequently will do so for the benefit of their loved ones. Even individuals attempting suicide because they are dissatisfied with life can be convinced not to commit suicide to avoid the bad effect their suicide would have on their loved ones.

1. Before you put people to work, let them know why they should do the things you pay them to do. The first category includes the benefit to the organization for doing the task right and/or the harm to the organization for doing it wrong. Describe the relationships between the individual tasks employees perform and how these tasks relate to tasks in other departments and to the mission of your organization.
2. When you want people to change for the purpose of solving problems or improving quality or productivity:
 - a. Explain the problems in detail
 - b. Explain the goals in detail
 - c. Discuss the solutions in detail
 - d. Explain the expected benefit of success, and
 - e. Expected agony of defeat
3. When a task is undesirable or difficult to do, or if the immediate consequences of the task are not rewarding, make an extra effort to explain the five items just given. You must be convincing when explaining the long-range benefits for that task being done. For example, in one company, outside salespeople were required to make notes in customer records after each sales call, but many of them did not do it. Management's stated reason for annotating customer records was to have a complete record of the customer activities in case a salesperson left and had to be replaced. As you might guess, that reason was of little interest to any current salesperson. The most important reason for making notes after