

Look Within When Subordinates Miss Goals

By Donna Rawady, Executive Coach

As leaders, if someone on our team is struggling and his or her performance continues to impact desired deliverables, or if our team goals are not being met, we may need to explore our contribution to the situation. Consider these examples.

A director of sales makes it clear as she hires new salespeople, that they are required to hit 100 percent of quota by month four on the job. However, in their fifth and sixth month two newer reps are hovering between 85 percent and 90 percent of quota. The director decides to let it ride for a while because she trusts the numbers will get better, and she likes being able to depend on applying the 85 percent to 90 percent to the team goal for the quarter. Regardless of the policy, the standard is immediately set: 85 percent to 90 percent of quota is acceptable. A positive option may be for the director to consider changing the expectation curve for new salespeople, redefining what excellence is.

A vice president is consistently disappointed in her director's ability to be well prepared. Recently, the director was asked to write the first draft of a project plan and present it to the VP in a meeting before involving the rest of the team to fine-tune strategies. Once again, when the VP realized that the individual was not prepared at the onset of the meeting, she expressed her disappointment. The VP then continued with the meeting where she and the director came up with the draft of the plan. If the VP was serious about

setting a standard for excellence as it relates to preparation, she may have rescheduled the meeting on the spot.

The standard for preparation would immediately become clear — Being well prepared is crucial. Being unprepared is unacceptable.

In addition to setting clear standards for excellence, we can effectively activate accountability by focusing on nonarguable versus arguable outcomes.

ARGUABLE action item or outcome: After a discussion with you, a team member agrees to make the effort to put some time aside to think about some initial strategies for a new project that's been on a back burner, but due in six months.

NONARGUABLE action item or outcome: After a discussion with you, a team member agrees that for your next meeting (which is scheduled before you leave this one) she is going to come prepared with what she feels are the top three strategies or action plans (with target dates for each) that are crucial within the next 30 days to get this project off the ground.

In the first scenario (i.e., arguable outcome), an individual may feel that she has indeed thought about strategies, even jotted down some ideas along the way. You on the other hand may be disappointed there are no documented plans for action when you revisit the status with her some time later. In the second scenario (i.e., nonarguable outcome), there's little room for a difference of opinion as to whether the individual has been successful at agreed upon deliverables and timeframes.

The author, Joline Godfrey, says in her book *Our Wildest Dreams*: "Success is measured in many ways. It is measured annually, quarterly, and nightly." At night, while we're reflecting on our frustrations of the day as they may relate to our team's or an individual's performance, perhaps we

should be asking ourselves if we've done our part in setting standards and activating accountability.

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