

# **7 Reasons Employee Performance Is Bad**



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1

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# Chapter 7

## Seven Reasons Employee Performance Is Bad

1. Are you ever frustrated by the poor performance of your employees?
2. Do you ever wonder what to do when the workers you have disciplined continue to perform below standard?
3. Are you certain that all the employees who are being disciplined have the ability to do their jobs?

***One of most common assumptions leaders make is that employees are trained and know what they should be doing.***

All organizations and supervisors from time to time have employees who struggle because of their inability to perform up to the standard that is required. When this happens, supervisors usually discipline the employees. In most instances, they do not take the time to discover why the performance is unacceptable.

It is critical today for managers to determine the real reasons for poor performance. Unless the root cause is addressed, the poor performance will likely resurface. Unfortunately, companies often terminate good employees who could be kept if we took the time to identify and address the root causes of their failure.

What is preventing us from solving the real problem? We may assume employees are not willing to perform up to the standard, or we may think they are lazy. In many instances, we act on these assumptions without verifying our thinking.

Performance problems will continue to reoccur until we take care of the underlying causes. Terminating employees should not be our personal goal or the goal of the organization. Management's goal must be to turn the employee around. To help us do that, let's examine seven reasons why an employee's performance may be inadequate.

## **1. Employees will perform at a low level if they are not thoroughly trained in all aspects of their job.**

One of most common assumptions leaders make is that employees are trained and know what they should be doing.

If this supposition is incorrect, it can easily lead to premature and inappropriate discipline. It is important, therefore, to recognize how false assessments are made so we can guard against them.

- ***Leaders believe the employee's resume or application.***

Applications and resumes give workers an opportunity to highlight their positive skills. It is human nature when completing an application or writing a resume to avoid the mention of weaknesses. Knowing

that such information might prevent an employer from being interested in hiring them, it is understandable that the prospect would leave the negative information out of the resume. The picture is further distorted when people exaggerate their strengths and abilities.

- ***Leaders sometimes assume workers have knowledge and skill because they want to avoid investing money to train them.***

Organizations often run on a tight budget. Because of this, they may be reluctant to invest in training. When that is the case, the success of an employee depends on how fast he or she can catch on to new duties. This ‘learn as you do’ approach is optimistically called ‘on the job training.’

In deciding about training, the question to ask is, “Will the employee benefit significantly from what the training was designed to teach? Will this training opportunity increase the employee’s performance?”



You might be thinking, “It takes time to train employees, and we can’t afford to have them away from their jobs that long.”

D.L. Moody, a minister of another era, said, “It is better to train 10 people than to do the work of 10 people. But it is harder” (7700 Illustrations, p. 721). Regardless of the organization, we should equip our people to perform to the best of their ability. This investment will give us the time to fulfill our leadership responsibility of motivating and mentoring others.

- ***Leaders assume that if employees have been sent to training, they are trained.***

In many instances, we send people to training, but we do not debrief them on what they learned or how they will use their new knowledge and skill. While we might wish it to be otherwise, simply watching a video in a classroom does not necessarily guarantee that the viewer leaves with a new skill or with greater subject mastery.

Unfortunately, leaders sometimes assume that when individuals have been exposed to a video on a subject, they have been adequately trained. Any qualified educator will tell you that is not the case.

Effective training typically involves hearing, seeing, and doing. When we leave one of these out, we compromise the likelihood that the participant will master and retain the skills or concepts that are presented.

- ***Leaders often assume people will meet performance standards and maintain consistency.***

Consistency is important if we are to maintain quality and move the organization in a particular direction. As we have seen, managers can no longer assume employees know what to do if they have not been trained.

We must understand each employee's skill level. Furthermore, we must work with each employee to insure that standards are consistently met.

Wise leaders help workers avoid as many unnecessary and costly mistakes as possible. This is normally done through coaching and monitoring as well as training.

As one adage says, “If people learn from their mistakes, many are getting a fantastic education.” We can certainly learn from our mistakes, and there is a place for ‘on the job training.’ Yet, it usually makes more sense and is ultimately more cost effective to train employees so that they do the job right and prevent mistakes from happening.

***If people learn from their mistakes, many are getting a fantastic education.***

- ***Leaders often assume that if employees think they know a skill, they do.***

What about the person who thinks he or she has the high level of knowledge required for a particular job? Is it safe to assume this person has no need for training? Not necessarily.

It is important not to throw training at problem areas without considering what needs to be accomplished. Leaders should utilize training to help employees grow.

Managers will find it valuable to monitor and benchmark the performance of each individual. When they do this, supervisors can use training to develop the employee in his or her areas of need.

## **2. Employees will perform at a low level if they do not feel supported by management.**

Support from management is not just a matter of words. It means allowing workers to develop and use their skills and abilities. Managers inadvertently signal a lack of support when they fail to do this.

Managers often fail to provide support in three specific ways.

- ***Managers sometimes send mixed messages.***

We are guilty of this when we say one thing and do another. The most blatant example is hiring an employee with the expectation he or she will do one particular job and then assigning him or her to do something entirely different.

This lack of support that comes from inconsistency is magnified when companies change management styles frequently or when they used autocratic approaches. An autocratic approach will undermine personal integrity and destroy team spirit.

Be aware of other's styles. Adapt ones that are effective and learn to deal with those styles that aren't so effective. Every employee, customer, supplier, and boss will vary in what works best with them. Don't assume anyone is a specific type. Intelligently observe and then ask to confirm your



assumptions (Benton, D., Warner Books, 1996, p. 101).

- ***Managers sometimes arbitrarily pull people off their assignments to take care of special projects.***

This practice can cause conflict within the employee and lead to stress throughout the organization. The effect is complicated if there is a lack of communication among the individuals involved.

If managers fail to consider the qualifications and ongoing responsibilities of the employee, it is easy to push the worker to the point of stress and ineffectiveness in all areas.

The supervisor of the employee tapped for a special project is also affected. Consider the message that is sent to a supervisor when a high-ranking manager frequently assigns an employee under the supervisor to a special project. If the supervisor is the last person to find out about the action, he or she feels devalued and out of the communication loop.

- ***Managers take authority from employees.***

Management demonstrates a lack of support when they remove authority from the employee. Many supervisors are not aware of the effect this can have on workers.

When we strip our employees of power, we limit the expertise available to make the project successful. We also undermine the self-esteem of the worker.

### **3. Employees will perform at a lower level if they are not involved in the communication loop.**

Organizations frequently talk about communication and the importance of exchanging information with employees. Yet, in many companies, little real communication takes place.

- ***When employees have no input, they seldom give their buy-in to what the leadership initiates.***

When employees are not committed to an organization or its mission, it slows down progress, makes the company less competitive, and limits the creativity of the group.

Many people feel the pressure to conform.

The pressure to conform produces a closed-minded outlook and imposes sanctions on those who do not adhere to the majority position. Innovative thinking leads people to express novel ideas or to take unpopular positions that they themselves may only partially understand and that others may not understand at all (Blake, R., Mouton, J, Productivity: The Human Side, 1981, AMACOM, p.112).

- ***Poor communication forces employees to work with outdated information.***

Information changes rapidly. Companies and departments must keep abreast of the changes, or they will find themselves going in the wrong direction. Using outdated information is usually not the fault of employees; rather, it is a failure of management to fulfill its responsibility.

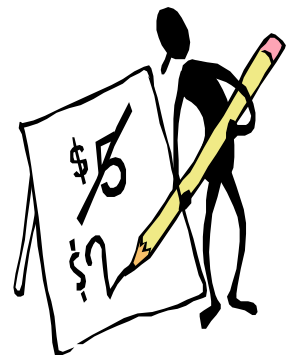
***Leaders can't grow if they allow their power to isolate them.***

When you isolate yourself, the flow of information and criticism to you dwindles. Maintaining communication and information gathering should be major tasks for a leader. Leaders can't grow if they allow their power to isolate them. Nor can they grow if they are surrounded by 'yes' people (Bethel, S., Making a Difference, Berkley, 1990, p. 185).

Feeding correct information downward to employees is a continuous task.

▪ ***Timely communication must be a priority.***

Information should be given to employees in a timely manner. As soon as new facts are known, the employees should be made aware of them. The old-style supervisors, who hold on to information and release it slowly as a way of protecting their turf, cause everyone to suffer. In order for trust to grow, the employees must



be in the loop.

#### **4. Employees will perform at a lower level if their skill set does not match the job.**

When we select the wrong person for the job, we set ourselves up for greater stress and lingering problems. Hiring the wrong person for the job is a disservice to the new employee and to the organization in general.

- ***We sometimes hire people because they remind us of friends or family.***

We sometimes select people because they remind us of other people we like. Sometimes we fail to hire people because they remind us of individuals we dislike. When we allow ourselves to be swayed in this way, we usually hire people who lack the skills necessary for success in a particular job.

- ***We sometimes hire people because they are the only ones who apply.***

When only one person applies, and we need a warm body in the position, the odds are against us choosing someone whose skills will match the job. When we hire out of desperation, it typically multiplies our leadership challenges. In addition, it brings morale down among the other employees who must work with the unqualified individual.

## **5. Employees will perform at a lower level if they are not given the correct tools and equipment.**

To be successful, employees must be given the right tools and resources for the job. If they have limited or inadequate training, failure is sure to follow. Several factors can lead to this. Cost is the first and most common reason managers give for failing to provide adequate tools and equipment.

Tools and equipment are usually expensive. Managers often use this fact as an excuse for not providing their people with the right resources to do their work. However, when we consider the cost of failure and inefficiency that stems from not having the correct tools and equipment, it becomes obvious that this line of thinking is not valid.

It is imperative for managers and employees to work smarter and be more productive. For this to happen, we must constantly be looking for ways to speed up production and make workers as successful as possible. This involves using the best tools and equipment for the job.

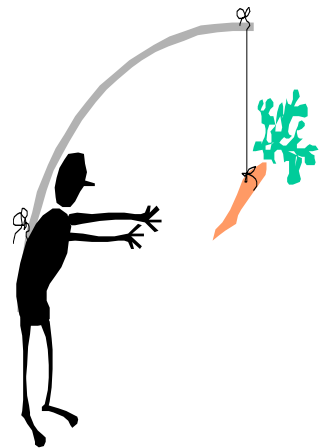
If you continually hear there is a shortage of equipment or tools, or if you notice employees have down time due to lack of equipment, you should make arrangements to share equipment, rent equipment, or purchase equipment.

## 6. Employees will perform at a lower level if they are not motivated to do the job.

Determining what you can do to help workers be motivated to do their jobs can be very challenging. It is helpful to recognize that all types of motivation fall into one of two categories. The factors that motivate us are either external or internal.

### ***External motivation.***

External motivation influences the person from without. Many authorities think such motivation is not as powerful as motivation from within. The following are examples of external motivators. When you use them appropriately, you will notice an increase in the productivity of some employees.



- ***Salary*** - The amount of the salary may encourage people to work and seek out employment with certain companies. Over time, some employees eventually look at their pay as something they deserve or to which they are entitled. At that point, it ceases to be an incentive.
- ***Insurance and benefits*** - Insurance and benefits are definitely needed in a day when health care cost is skyrocketing. However, in most cases, people do not go to work each day excited about benefits and

insurance. On the other hand, if you find you are forced to reduce the insurance or other benefits your company provides its employees, you will definitely lower the morale of the workforce.

- ***Being recognized for work accomplishments*** - Giving plaques and certificates is an effective way to praise good behavior. While some employees respond to this type of recognition, other people look at the practice as superficial. It is becoming common for employees to view what supervisors consider external motivators as something to which they are entitled. The attitude seems to be, “If one company or organization will not give it to me, then I will look somewhere else.” This sense of entitlement increases when companies are in a position of having to compete for employees.

## ***Internal motivation***

Internal motivation moves from within. This motivation creates excitement in employees, and it keeps them interested in doing their work even when the supervisor is not present. Internal motivation creates in an employee a strong inward desire to perform. This inward desire reduces the need for strong monitoring work.



Some examples of internal motivations include the following.

▪ **Exciting work** - Not all work can be exciting, but we can spread the good assignments around among employees. When possible, leaders must be careful not to allow a select group of people in the organization to hold all the challenging and meaningful jobs. Tom Peters points out the power of a noble task that challenges workers to be their best. In his book, Service Firm 50, he says such work requires "... having a clear vision! It means standing for something...striving for something...struggling for something...larger than ourselves...for something noble and uplifting and inspiring" (Peters, T., Service Firm 50, 1999, Knox, p. 97).

▪ **Able to make decisions on the job** – Employees like having the authority to make decisions in areas of responsibility for which they have been trained and equipped. As experience increases, employees become more motivated when they are given the power to make decisions. Obviously, this authority should be given after they have demonstrated they are competent in the areas being assigned.

▪ **Work that influences others** - Influence is a very special gift. It is powerful enough to move some people to try what others will not even dare to imagine. Making an impact on the

**Employees like having the authority to make decisions in areas of responsibility for which they have been trained and equipped.**



organization and in the lives of other people is a powerful motivator for certain personality types. It is one of the reasons people go to work in places such as drug rehabs, the ministry, or law enforcement. Though they are not making a high salary, they love every minute of the work because they feel they are making a difference. Each worker can find areas in which he or she can make a difference for the organization.

- ***Able to understand how the job helps the company***

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Seeing the bigger picture of how the job contributes to the overall performance of the company creates a feeling of pride and a strong sense of responsibility. Imagine how frustrating it would be to work for a company twenty years without knowing how your job impacts the bottom line or the other departments of the organization.

## **7. Employees will perform at a lower level if they are not able to control their attitudes.**

Attitudes are more caught than taught. If we are not careful, negative or angry thoughts can negatively affect productivity. As we examine bad attitudes, let me remind you to discipline behavior and performance rather than attitude.

- ***Bad attitudes impact others.***

Bad attitudes tend to spread quickly. One of the most devastating experiences of a new employee is to be exposed to a negative worker who has been in the organization for a long period. This kind of interaction could produce a generation of destructive attitudes and actions. A bad attitude in one employee is like a cancer that kills the morale of others.

▪ ***Low morale from bad attitudes results in apathy.***

Low morale causes workers to become apathetic and resist performing to their full potential. Apathy is defined by Webster as “lack of feeling or emotion, impassiveness or lack of interest or concern, indifference (Webster Dictionary, 1971, p. 40). Apathy causes many employees to hold back and not work with the intensity required to win.

Are your employees playing so they will win, or are they playing so they don't lose? Some employees are working just hard enough to hang on to their jobs but not hard enough to make a significant contribution. As a leader, you must take steps to change this kind of mindset.

In conclusion, we must seek to understand the reason for poor performance in order to determine if an employee can be salvaged. If the employee is incorrigible, we must have the courage to terminate him or her.

When we discipline without knowing whether the employee has been trained, we are not really disciplining. Rather, we are punishing the person without justification. When we get to the root of the problem, we put ourselves

in a position to change the situation and prevent performance problems from recurring.

Each time we are able to motivate an employee and turn a performance problem around, we benefit the organization as well as the individual.

<b>Gap</b>	<b>What can be done?</b>

## Action Plan

1. Describe the length and depth of training employees go through?

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2. In what areas could management be more supportive of employees?

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3. In what areas are constant communication gaps experienced?

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# **Comprehensive Project Management 2 Days**

**Registered Project Management Institute  
Course – 14 PDU**

**Description:** This intensive two-day course focuses on ways employees can run projects faster and more effectively. This course recommends a six-phase process as well as numerous preventative actions to efficiently speed up a project. Participants will learn how to successfully create, monitor, and guide the project's scope and critical path as well as how to manage multiple projects. Participants will diagnose and prevent problems such as scope creep, time slippage, and team conflicts.

## **Objectives:**

- Define the six step project management process
- Understand the project's life cycle
- Determine five ways to give proper leadership within culture
- Design an agenda for the first project team meeting
- Identify the triple constraints of every project
- Define the project drivers
- Demonstrate interviewing techniques that will assist in determining project specifics
- Review constraint red flags to watch
- Show how to set, control, and monitor project scope
- Summarize major areas to brainstorm

- Classify who to place on your project team
- Label role descriptions and project responsibilities when you have no position power
- Facilitate brainstorming and planning meetings
- Create a modified code of conduct for running an empowered team
- Examine forms in scheduling a project and possible scheduling issues
- Formulate a WBS, work breakdown structure
- Track multiple projects
- Evaluate a real time line
- Evaluate why time calculations are wrong
- Examine characteristics of a milestone
- Analyze strengths and weaknesses of a Gantt chart
- Define the critical path
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a critical path
- Explore how to handle delays
- Discuss effects of a late start
- Examine steps in creating a project budget and developing a master budget control process
- Discuss implementation of project plan
- Identify seven things which must be communicated in every project
- Review who should be communicated to
- Evaluate the results of poor communication
- Identify a checklist for team meetings
- Analyze signs of poor updates
- Describe ways to communicate bad news
- Classify how to manage the project through influence rather than power

- Summarize danger signals to watch
- Assess how to crash a project
- Implement close down checklists and handoff procedures
- Identify phase out of the project
- Conduct a postmortem

# Understanding Behavior In Organizations

**Description:** This intensive two-day course will focus on ways government executives can analyze, develop, motivate, and lead their specific section in a strategic way. This course will examine culture and what impacts and influences it; morale and motivational issues; and, conflict and people issues. Participants will learn how to successfully diagnose the issues in an organization and develop plans for making changes to move the organization in the direction of success. Participants will analyze ways to make their organizations more effective and efficient.

## **Objectives:**

- Analyze thoughts with an organizational behavior self assessment
- Diagnose personal organizational views in self assessment
- Understand the incompetence in the organization
- Determine clear understanding of organizational behavior and its influences
- Discuss organizational culture and what will be most effective
- Analyze the influences on culture
- Examine strengths, weaknesses, and expectations on worker behavior
- Examine attitudes and their influences



- Create process for modifying attitudes
- Label values of progressive organizations
- Examine supporting values
- Create and formulate seven levels of values
- Examine communication
- Formulate strategies for formal and informal methods
- Analyze effective feedback systems
- Evaluate communication proxemic zones
- Examine communication mishaps
- Analyze effectiveness and ineffectiveness in an organization
- Define different motivational theories
- Evaluate fundamentals in using rewards
- Explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- Examine tactics for enriching the work environment
- Discuss excuses given about goals
- Identify different levels of power and how to use it
- Discuss reinforcement that impacts behavior and performance
- Explore halo and horn effects within an organization
- Formulate why people don't make decisions
- Analyze seven questions to help in decision making
- Compare different decision-making strategies
- Examine the philosophy in confronting and reducing conflict
- Model designs for approaching or confronting others
- Examine how conflict ignites and influences
- Analyze how to equip others for leadership
- Compare three levels of organizational learning
- Implement action plans developed through the course

# Creating a Positive Work Environment

## *Changing Negative Workers Into Productive*

**Description:** Participants will learn ways to turn around negative situations in the workplace. Outline new strategies to take action quickly. Examine why negative situations ripple into every area of the organization. Create approaches which will turn a negative situation into an optimistic workforce.

### **Objectives:**

- Analyze the cost of negativity in U.S. organizations
- Evaluate the challenges of the modern workplace
- Formulate a 5 step approach to examine negativity
- Review the CIA way negativity grows
- Explore the inner/personal dialog
- Identify the family influence
- Assess ways for rebuilding trust
- Explore situational, habitual, and chronic negativity
- Discuss the effect of someone's negativity on you
- Create stair steps toward negativity
- Comprehend results of negativity
- Compare ways to deal with the negaholics
- Understand rules for confronting negativity
- Analyze how to break the victim complex
- Define ways to impact negative culture
- Discuss how to fight personal negativity

# Successfully Managing People

## 2-Day Course

**Description:** *Successfully Managing People* is designed to give skills to those in supervision or management. The program is filled with behavioral skills that will help motivate, equip, and discipline the worker. Interactive pieces are placed within this course to allow the learner the opportunity to interject real life situations. Those in attendance will leave with tricks of the trade that can only be learned after years of experience.

### **Objectives:**

- Define barriers technical managers face when managing
- Analyze job responsibilities
- Evaluate communication skills and styles which technical managers must possess
- Analyze hurdles technical managers face in dealing with different divisions
- Assess modern day managing myths in technical managing
- Select qualities technical managers must possess
- Evaluate how to coach employees toward success
- Equip technical and non-technical workers with new skills
- Develop a Mission Statement and Vision
- Identify vision through leadership

- Understand why visions fail
- Evaluate where you are going and setting realistic goals
- Explain tough-minded leadership
- Contrast different change strategies
- Classify why people block change
- Choose ways to reduce employee resistance
- Evaluate changes which support goals
- Identify secrets to implementing change
- Develop core values in the technical industry
- Explore strategies for creating trust
- Evaluate an empowerment success list
- Define ways to equip and empower
- Describe requirements for being an overcomer
- Analyze two types of motivation
- Examine ways to align motivational techniques to workers
- Evaluate how to hire great employees
- Analyze the disciplining of employees and ways for changing behavior
- Identify how to track employees
- Discuss values of successful coaching
- Understand the 3 step process to coaching
- Recall attributes of successful coaches
- Analyze common coaching mistakes

# How to Increase Communication and Get the Message Across

**Description:** This intensive two-day course will focus on ways to use communication as a way to inform and influence others. Participants will understand how to focus a message and incorporate means to gain information using effective communication skills. This course will recommend ways of building stronger communication skills and will provide insight to different communication styles. Participants will learn new power by using certain words to impact the message and by asking questions that get noticed.

## **Objectives:**

- Analyze the value of small talk
- Evaluate how to approach people
- Identify perception
- Examine what impacts perception
- Compare reducing perception differences
- Discuss how to gain understanding
- Demonstrate what to do when you mess up
- Analyze communication styles
- Develop ways to increase understanding
- Compare kinds of communication
- Break down what communication should be communicated upline

- Examine reasons why communicating upline is extremely difficult
- Identify questions to ask if miscommunication is common
- Evaluate verbal softeners
- Discuss how to match your body language and the message
- Detail characteristics of a poor listener
- Predict obstacles of listening
- Classify communication that calms people
- Define management's role in meetings
- Describe ingredients of effective meetings
- Evaluate receiving feedback
- Design responses to negative feedback
- Understand techniques for disagreeing
- Discuss caution signs that a disagreement is turning into a conflict
- Formulate 7 stages of intergroup conflict
- Describe ways to reduce intergroup conflict
- Utilize benefits of humor



## **Dr. Keith Mathis**

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***PMI - Registered Education Provider***

Over the last several years, Dr. Keith Mathis has emerged as one of the most effective business trainers in the field traveling throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and South America. His provocative, informative, humorous presentations on a variety of organizational development topics are demanded by progressive companies. An animated and often electrifying platform speaker, Keith never merely talks to an audience, but he also seeks to involve them in his presentations through high content and numerous illustrations. Intellectually demanding of himself, Keith demands no less of his audiences!

As a consultant who specializes in organizational behavior and development, he comes with thousands of presentations to every kind of organization. He is flexible by teaching in full day formats, multi-day conferences, or keynotes for conventions.

He is founder of The Mathis Group, based in St. Louis, Missouri. His work includes teaching corporate America skills on topics such as: teambuilding, leadership, motivation, conflict resolution, project management, supervision, performance appraisals, goal setting and numerous other organizational proficiencies. His problem solving expertise provides him with the ability to help companies in the solving of the most complex difficulties.

Keith continues to broaden his knowledge base and practical advice by teaching. He serves as an adjunct professor of business/management at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, teaching Consulting, Public Speaking, Total Quality, Project Management, Management, Communication, Customer Value, Leadership, Marketing, Organizational Behavior, Strategic Planning, and Group Dynamics.

Keith has authored numerous training programs as well as magazine and newspaper articles.

Keith holds a B.A. in Behavioral Science, a M.S. in Management, and a Ph.D. in Administration Management.





# ***Meet Dr. Keith Mathis***

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Keith holds a B.A. in Behavioral Science, a M.S. in Management, and a Ph.D. in Administration Management.