

THE ESSENTIAL HALF:

BUILDING A BETTER PERFORMER

By
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The age-old question, “How do I get people to do a good job?” has an answer, even several answers.

The individual performer comes to the position or job with certain *values*. These values are based on and molded by their beliefs, educational experiences, and background. These values often affect their decision-making and choices, and therefore, their actions or behaviors. These values are not “etched in stone” and can be altered or influenced to some degree through coaching, training, and reinforcement.

Another resident characteristic or trait that performers bring to a job is their *capacity* or capability. This applies to possessing the necessary physical, mental, and emotional capability to do the job. Capabilities can include physical, intellectual, and emotional abilities.

As individuals, people can function without one or more of their limbs. But, in order to survive, people must, at a minimum, have their torso (with organs, heart, etc.) and their head (with brain). The most extreme example would be a person who functions minimally with only their head and torso. But, each limb provides a person additional capabilities and flexibility. The more limbs, the more potential they have to function.

This is a model called “*The Essential HALF*” where *HALF* stands for *Hands, Arms, Legs, and Feet*. This model or metaphor symbolizes that a performer is not fully functional when they are missing essential performance segments or “limbs.” The more of these segments or elements the person is missing, the more difficult it is to function and perform optimally. Someone with all the segments (or limbs) has the added resources to be more effective than someone missing one or more. The *values* are associated with the head because people relate the brain to one’s choices and action. It is there regardless of the presence or absence of the other limbs or segments but has considerable influence on how people apply themselves and the choices and actions taken. Without that capacity, the limbs would be meaningless. It is like the operating system in a computer. The core of the body is the *capacity* in that it is fundamental to ensuring the person can and is willing to perform the tasks expected of them. If the performer is “limited” in mental, emotional, or physical capacity or capability, the other limbs or segments are not enough to offset this deficiency.

Now, let’s examine the individual segments or elements that make up the total body and discuss the impact of those missing elements.

ELEMENT ONE: Expectations

Individuals require a clear understanding of what is expected of them. This is often done through a review of roles and responsibilities, as well as the expected outcomes (deliverables) of their work. This could include desired outcomes, how to produce those outcomes, as well as deadlines and quality standards. People may fail at their tasks when they do not understand what is needed or expected from them and how they will be measured.

ELEMENT TWO: Resources

To be successful, individuals also need to have the resources such as time, tools, support, people assistance, information, and other aids to help them produce the outcomes expected of them. It is common for a person to want to do a good job but not have the tools or time to perform it as required. This can lead to great frustration.

ELEMENT THREE: Incentives

Most people respond better to positive reinforcement—recognition for the work completed. It is a way of being acknowledged for contributions. Are there incentives to do a good job because “what gets rewarded gets repeated?” This sometimes comes in the

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form of compensation, but most times it is acknowledgement or recognition for a job well done. Leaders should provide a level of recognition for effort other than the paycheck. Most people need to feel appreciated for their output.

ELEMENT FOUR: Consequences

On the other hand, are there consequences or penalties if employees chose not to do a good job? It is not uncommon to find situations where people chose not to do a good job or perform as expected because there is “nothing there” if they do and nothing to hold them accountable if they don’t. Without anything to drive or encourage them to produce, an individual may take the path of least resistance and not do it or not do it well. Lack of accountability for performance can lead to substandard performance.

ELEMENT FIVE: Skills & Knowledge

Does the individual have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform the task correctly and to standard? Employers need to consider how to produce those abilities to perform well such as job aids, training, coaching, and practice. It is possible to have a clear understanding of what is needed to be done but be unclear as to the sequence of tasks to accomplish it. Sound training, in its many forms, helps to improve this element.

ELEMENT SIX: Motivation

Does the individual have the attitude and drive to perform as expected? A negative attitude influences low productivity and even destructive behavior. Some of the factors that impact positive or negative feelings about the job can include drive or ambition, determination, energy, enthusiasm, and attitudes toward the job or the job environment. If the other elements are in place, a person would be inspired to do their job well.

ELEMENT SEVEN: Feedback

Feedback is providing the information as to how an individual is performing their job in respect to the expectations or standards. This may not be effective in many situations as the person may not hear when they do well or only hear when they don’t do well. Good feedback helps a person “check” their bearings and make course corrections. It also helps them to receive reinforcement of the types of behaviors and performance wanted and needed from them. The feedback needs to be prompt as well and not just once a year at a performance review.

ELEMENT EIGHT: Information

Another form of feedback is information. But this is less so on how a person is performing and more so on what data and information they require to make decisions to perform their tasks. This information “cues” their actions by letting them know when it is time to conduct a task, if the task was to standard, and/or the timeliness of the task. If a person knows what to do and how to do it well but

does not receive the information, data or communications in a timely manner, they may not be able to perform the job correctly.

The role as a leader is to enable each performer to operate with as many of these segments as possible, and once it is determined what “limbs” are missing, the right “orthopedic devices” or solutions can be applied to help the performer be more successful and efficient. ■



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