



Mediocrity can be seen as the decision to produce an inferior to middling performance. Take a moment to reflect on your Company and notice what efforts are made regarding pride in performance and attitude to work in general.

If you are noticing that your team seem happy to accept that:

- Okay is good enough, or that
- Some effort is better than none - or even that;
- We're okay as long as we break even

You could be part of a growing number of companies and corporations who are experiencing the 'Mediocre Phenomenon'.

At its worst there is a lack of enthusiasm, motivation and attitude to getting the job done to the best of the (mediocre performers) ability. At its best there is the mind-set 'Well I'm here aren't I?'

There are three possible reasons for the 'mediocrity' that exists:

- ✓ Laziness – This person has, and always tries to do the least amount possible as well as emanating a sense of 'entitlement'.
- ✓ Reaction to an event (professional or personal) – This person is usually motivated and hardworking, but something has occurred which has changed their attitude to work.
- ✓ Well-considered decision – This person believes that their work output should reflect the pay they receive (one possible reason), and will therefore perform accordingly.

All three scenarios can exist within the same workplace, but how you tackle each one must be pertinent to their situation. When considering dealing with each, the guidelines at the top of page two of this article, will be helpful. But keep in mind, this is an initial step only, for long-term offenders you may need to elicit expert advice.

If, however, you just want to get a general feel of the level of mediocrity that exists at work, some useful things to ponder are: What your place of work is like, specifically

what you are noticing, and how long this has been going on. Then answer the following questions, which will help to indicate where your workplace currently lies regarding mediocrity.

1. What is the current mood in the office?
2. What are common excuses given for lack of excellence in finished performance?
3. Does personal accountability exist in individuals related to this? (Number 2 above)
4. What type of responses do you get when challenging mediocre performance?
5. How long has this been going on?

If your answers reflected that mediocrity is residing at your place of work – you will need to manage this, to stop it spreading further.

When addressing widespread mediocrity, it is pertinent to choose the worst offender first, and arrange a one on one meeting to discuss your observations. The following guidelines will be useful:

- Ask how they perceive things are going at work.
- Comment on what you have observed about their current mediocre attitude.
- Remind them of their best performance (have this to hand) – there must be at least one!
- Reflect on their enthusiasm and attitude when you first encountered them at work, then -
- Compare that memory to now.
- Ask how they view this situation.
- Challenge them to change this – Ask how they might do this.
- Offer support to enhance the change.
- Plan a meeting with them in two weeks to follow this up.

Then make sure that you do just that. Part of the reason for the mediocrity taking hold and even growing, is that it has been allowed to! Why has this been the case? Why have mediocre attitudes/performance become a fixture at your place of work? Sometimes reasons can be as simple as people being time poor, demands growing and the market becoming more competitive.

It is most important that you deal with, not just the reason mediocre behaviour exists in your place of work, but also ways in which you – as Leaders and Managers – can instil pride in performance once again. To do this, you may need to revisit systems in place that address coaching or mentoring around performance. When was the last performance review held? And, to what depth?

Mediocrity has a tendency to become contagious fairly quickly, as others notice when underperformance is tolerated, accepted and even encouraged because of no adverse reaction.

What are the levels of motivation that currently exist within the workplace. Have they changed? How have they changed?

In this economy it is more important for people to be acknowledged and valued, in other than a monetary sense, especially when some organisations are needing to freeze wages because of the current economic climate. If yours is one of these how are you currently rewarding your team members?

Any ideas you instil need to be reinforced and incorporate these factors:

1. Revisiting the Motivational Tools being utilised within the organisation.
2. Taking steps to change these as necessary.
3. Monitoring the Managers in charge of the mediocre offenders.
4. Addressing factors that have allowed this to grow unheeded for so long.
5. Reconfiguring systems to ensure zero possibility of this re-emerging.
6. Following up and monitoring all decisions made.

It is even more important now to address issues within before they become the elephant in the room. Unfortunately, what is becoming increasingly obvious is that Management and HR Personnel are sometimes rendered helpless in the face of mediocrity – simply because they haven't seen this manifest quite so strongly before, or they get such a defensively negative reaction when they bring it up!

Don't be afraid to notice, address and follow through with this insidious behaviour – as the more you leave it, the more it is likely to grow.

By ignoring mediocrity you (in effect) encourage it to persist. And in some cases it can become viral. Frankly, there is no room in today's industry for mediocre performance, there is too much competition, the bottom line is precariously balanced in some industries and the culture of your company could be at risk.

For more on this topic, and some further ideas to address this issue - see the Workshop Outlines and Resources we provide, listed below.

Recommendations

For the individuals exhibiting Mediocre tendencies:

Workshops and/or Coaching sessions on

- ✚ Mediocrity at Work
- ✚ Attitude at Work
- ✚ Personal Accountability
- ✚ Motivation

For the Managers leading the Mediocre individuals

Workshops

- ✚ Personal Accountability Workshop
- ✚ Leading Mediocre Performers
- ✚ Emotional Intelligence with Difficult People
- ✚ Motivating Mediocre Performers

Consultations

- ✚ Consulting Session (Groups of Managers/Leaders) dealing with specific individualised issues concerning Mediocre Performance at Work
- ✚ Consulting Session (one on one) with Managers/Leaders targeting specific concerns regarding Mediocre Performance at Work.

Please contact us if you would like information on any of the above