

Potential And Performance

When looking at potential and performance it seems that commonly, there is, a difference between what people can and do achieve. Although there are potentially many reasons for this, while this gap exists, the impact on teamwork, motivation, profit margins and the culture of a company is significant and needs to be addressed.

When considering potential, the following questions highlight whether it is underperformance due to unrealised potential, rather than lack of ability, that you are seeing.

Interestingly, not everyone who performs well has high potential, compared to the majority of those having high potential, performing well.

Try this checklist for an individual you think is not working to potential:

- Is the attitude shown usually apathetic or negative?
- Is a lack of personal commitment present?
- Do they emanate a lack of self-belief?
- Do they feel their contribution is not that important?
- Do they have the ability needed for the role they are in?
- Do they show a lack of 'intrinsic' motivation?

If you answered yes to 4 or more of these questions, you are dealing with someone who is not working to potential. It is important to deal with this fairly quickly, so that you can begin to 'swing' the pendulum the other way.

As you start to do this, be aware that you are now building the potential in this individual; rather than focusing solely on performance. After all, you have probably been solely focused on their performance, and as it hasn't changed things, it is now time for 'unrealised potential' to be addressed. There are many and varied opinions on what constitutes potential at work, but I believe, ultimately, it encompasses the following:

- Intrinsic Motivation
- Attitude
- Self Belief
- Experience
- Ability

Self-awareness is another significant area in developing potential, if not the most important one. Without this you cannot move anything forward. Self awareness is a core capability of Emotional Intelligence, and without doubt – those people who have developed this fully, tend to go further and higher than their contemporaries. The added advantage of building self-awareness is that individuals build on areas of weakness and tend to understand why they need to change and **actually** want to change! Compare that with those that don't and therein lies the challenge!

Another key attribute people who achieve their potential have, is around vision and goal setting. They see very clearly where they are at, but they also plan where they would like to be in 1, 2 and even 5 year's time.

Developing the following traits in your team will naturally motivate them toward fulfilling their potential:

- Encourage their attitude to become a 'can do' one, and 'things will work' instead of the more typical 'can't' or 'won't even attempt to try' one.
- Build their self-belief so it is strong. To facilitate this, start them talking about themselves and their efforts being worthwhile, challenging and achievable.
- Elicit their experiences in life (both work and personal) they believe have contributed to their success at work.
- Instil your belief in them that their ability to perform at a high level can be demonstrated on a daily basis.
- Grow their level of intrinsic motivation to the level where their thinking changes statements from 'I want to do that because...' as opposed to 'I should do that because...'

To really cement these traits in your team, you need to start communicating with them about what **they** think has blocked their potential being reached. As this may be the first time that someone has ever addressed this with them, it could come as something of a shock. To that end make the meeting, less structured rather than more, and encourage their openness. You need to elicit a strong 'buy-in' from them, so you need to plan it for a suitably 'stress free' time, so they can be fully engaged in the discussion. You may also need to have a less authoritative and more collegial approach so they don't feel threatened or got at in any way. This is a sensitive area for some people, and if they sense they are being judged at all harshly or unkindly, you may experience them withdrawing, becoming defensive, or even apathetic. Regardless of how the meeting unfolds; there are really only two possible scenarios with this approach: They open up and talk through why they don't work to their potential, or they show no 'self awareness' or interest in developing their potential further. If that happens you can either performance manage them - even bringing in some personal accountability coaching, or direct them to come back to you with a suggested 'treatment plan' to help shift their behaviour. The following areas of focus should be included in both scenarios:

- What motivates them?
- Their goals now and 1, 2 and 5 years from now.
- Their level of self-awareness and ways they work with this.
- A) Their personal values. B) Are they aligned with the Company's?
- Their drivers.
- The core belief they have about their potential.
- The core belief they have about their performance.
- What influences them in the workplace?

In all cases, you need to look at ways that you can create a 'buy-in', because part of the problem has been they – refuse to motivate themselves to perform better or; there is an issue blocking their motivation, attitude and ultimately workplace performance. This is why it is important to get to the 'real' issue rather than the 'implied' issue. Ultimately understanding their core belief will help to shift this. Generally speaking your core beliefs are seen as the beliefs that dictate the life you live.

- Who you are
- What you think of yourself
- What you are and are not allowed to do and be
- How to behave and react to people, experiences and the world
- What to expect
- Your success
- What you can and cannot have

Encourage them to explore this fully, as it is a fundamental key to aligning their goals, motivation, personal values, drivers and influences.

And finally, you can 'lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink', but you can begin the process of looking at how to develop potential in those who clearly have it but aren't using it!

For more on this topic, and some further ideas to address this issue - see the Workshop

outlines and resources we provide, listed below.

For the individuals needing to develop their potential - Workshops and/or Coaching sessions on:

Maximising Potential.
Personal Accountability.
Vision and Goal Setting.
Emotional Intelligence.

For the Managers leading individuals/teams to have 'Maximum Potential' in the workplace:

Performance Management - Building top potential and performance.
Personal Accountability - Teaching others personal responsibility through developing potential and self-awareness.
Motivation at Work – Moving possible potential to actual potential.

Consultations:

Masters of Communication Ltd
Phone: 0508 4 MASTERS - 027 483 2323
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Website: www.mastersofcommunication.co.nz

Consulting Session (Groups of Managers/Leaders) dealing with specific/individualised issues on Maximising Potential in self/others.

Consulting Session (one on one) with Managers/Leaders targeting specific concerns regarding Maximising Potential in self/others.

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

By Gloria Masters

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