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An article by Donald Cooper, MBA...

Why are some of your staff not performing...and whose fault is it?

There are about 10 reasons why your staff may not be performing...and most of them aren't their fault. So, much of the time when we're unhappy with them, it's actually because we haven't been effective leaders or managers.

Below is my list of the 10 possible causes of non-performance. For each person on your team who isn't measuring up, go down the list of possible reasons, shown below, and identify what the real problem is and who needs to do what to fix it. You'll be amazed to discover that in many cases, the "fixing" is up to you.

Cooper's 10 reasons for non-performance...and how to fix them:

- 1. They truly don't understand what you want done, the standard to which you want it done, or by when you want it done.** Your first job as a business owner, leader or manager is to create clarity about...
 - a) What the business commits to deliver to its customers, to its investors and to its employees,
 - b) What it commits to become...and,
 - c) How you commit to behave along the way (your values & standards).If you haven't created clarity about those 4 things, you haven't done your first and most important job...and only you can fix that.
- 2. They lack the skills, information, tools, time or empowerment to do it!** So, you've given your people a job to do without giving them all the resources they need to do it. It's not their fault...you need to fix this. Sit down with non-performers and ask them what skills, information, tools, time or empowerment they need to be extraordinary.
- 3. They don't understand why it's important.** Many employees simply do not understand how their job affects customer retention, operational efficiency, job satisfaction or job safety for other team members, or the overall success of the company. They work on one little piece of the puzzle and no one has shown them what the whole puzzle looks like. Once again, it's not their fault.
- 4. It doesn't have to be done! You just think it does. They get that...and you don't.** I often see situations where an employee knows full well that a particular instruction from the top makes no sense, so they don't do it and hope that the boss doesn't notice.



5. **They have a better way to do it.** Your people often find a better way to do things than the way you told them and, if they know that you're not open to suggestions, they'll just do it the better way and, once again, hope that you don't notice. Then, if you do notice them doing it a different way, and give them Hell, you have permanently demotivated them. On the other hand, by acknowledging and rewarding innovation and proactivity, you will encourage folks to find better ways to do things and share them with others.

6. **A personal problem or crisis is temporarily distracting them.** Are you there for your staff when their life hits a "bump"? This is not only good for the person who hits the "bump...it's good for everyone else on the team because they now know that if their life hits a "bump", the team will be there to support them.

Caution: Be clear about which problems you are not prepared to support, like drug abuse or compulsive gambling that can lead to employees stealing from the company or each other to support their addiction.

7. **They're good people in the wrong job.** Earlier in your career you were probably given jobs for which you were not suited. Nobody's good at everything. Sometimes we put great people in the wrong job and it's not their fault. Before giving someone the boot, ask them if there's some other job in the business that they think they could perform excellently...and what kind of training they think they'd need to achieve that.

There are people who are good at managing "things" who should never be given the job of managing people. For example, a great product designer, accountant or receivables manager might be a terrible department manager.

8. **They're underpaid or underappreciated...or both.** Good people can go sour pretty quickly when they're underpaid or underappreciated. Or, they simply leave and go some place that is less toxic. The solution is simple. Pay more and expect more. The best people never work for the lowest pay. They don't have to. Then, create a culture of appreciation, acknowledgement and celebration.

9. **It's beyond their mental or physical abilities.** Some people simply lack the mental or physical capacity to do the job. They could be very nice people. They could even be trying their best ...but they just can't do it and it's hurting the business. Find something less demanding for them to do, or counsel them on how to find an appropriate position elsewhere.

10. **They simply don't want to do it. They're lazy, bitter, uncaring or dishonest.** Some people are losers. They're not rescuable, they're toxic and they're killing you. It's not your fault, but shame on you if you don't deal with them. Just make sure that their non-performance is not caused by one of the other 9 factors and, if they really are a #10, give them the boot ASAP.

So, will you make a list of your non-performers and then use the above 10 "causes" to determine what needs fixing, how you can improve as a manager, who needs help and who needs to be given the boot? It's up to you. This stuff never fixes itself.