

Decisions, Decisions

By T. Scott Gross

When a team player is not performing to standards, begin by asking this simple question: Could he (she) perform to standard if forced? If the answer is no, you are dealing with a problem of skills. Training is in order.

If the employee could perform to standards but for whatever reason does not, training is of no value. Training an employee who can do the job but chooses not to is a matter of wrestling with a pig—all you get is dirty and the pig loves it.

The first order of training is to decide if the problem is worth solving. Too many resources are wasted on non-issues.

“How fast do you keyboard?”

“One hundred twenty words per minute with one error.” Leave it alone!

The second order of business is to decide if the problem is a deficiency of knowledge. An employee who can do the work but chooses not to is not in need of training. This employee needs feedback, consequences, the removal of obstacles, or the removal of punishment. What if you are dealing with a lack of knowledge? Then, and only then, is training likely to matter.

There is a third option when poor performance comes not from a lack of motivation or information. Sometimes you have to be honest with yourself and the employee and admit there isn't a good fit between the talents of the employee and the talents required by the job.

If a poorly motivated employee fails to respond to feedback, consequences, and the removal of obstacles and punishment, fire them! You've done all that you

can do. If a poorly trained employee fails to respond to training, check your original diagnosis. It may have been a matter of motivation after all. But if you were right in the first place and performance fails to improve in spite of adequate training, fire them. And finally, if the matter is simply a matter of 'he ain't got it' then do the humane thing—release them

Life doesn't always work the way we would like it to work. Rather than flogging an employee who doesn't fit the job why not give him the push he needs to go somewhere he can be successful?

One of the major reasons for employee turnover is stress from poor performance. Yes, poor performance causes on-the-job stress. Do you really believe people enjoy going to work and failing? Not even! No one ever wakes in the morning and says, “I can't wait to go to work and look like an idiot.”

The biggest training mistake is reserving training only for the purpose of fixing problems. Training is most effective when it is used to improve on strengths. Think back on the terminations you have participated in or know of. How many of those were the results of the performer not having the skills to do the job? You can't think of many, can you? As a matter of fact, I bet you can't think of a single instance where an employee was dismissed due to lack of skills. Most job failures have little or nothing with lack of skills. *Most failures are a matter of poor fit.*

Jim Collins writing in *Good to Great* likens the job to a bus.

Collins says “the truly great companies are those that have the right person on the bus in the right seat driven by the right driver.” If your bus isn't heading in the right direction at the posted speed, better stop the bus, find out if you have the right people on the bus, and if they are all in their assigned seats. If everything checks out in the back, better take a good look in the rearview mirror.