



Management Challenge: How to Enhance Average Performance

Average performers are usually an overlooked resource for increasing work quality. It is all too easy to pay attention only to performance extremes. Top performers have built-in rewards. Their performance at the top of the charts makes it easy to provide meaningful and specific feedback.

Performance problems at the other end of the spectrum also demand attention. When performance is clearly below target, it is visible to almost everyone involved in the effort, and you have little choice but to try to make improvements.

Because of these day-to-day pressures, average performers are too often neglected; we only act when performance erodes into a problem. However, active engagement not only prevents potential performance problems, improving the performance of your average employees "raises the curve" for the entire group and improves the effectiveness of your team as a whole. With the right encouragement and motivation, average performers can help you achieve above average results.

Here are five practical action steps that will help you get the most out of your average performers:

1. Describe an aspect of the person's performance that is above the standard and explain why it deserves special recognition. Be specific about the above-average performance and show your positive emotion about it. Be sure to state why it is important to the department/division/company. By identifying and strongly acknowledging a specific aspect of an employee's performance that is above standard, you reinforce that employee's confidence in his or her ability to be more than an average performer in other areas too.
2. Express appreciation and desire to help in other aspects of performance. Show your high interest in helping develop your employee's other capabilities as well.
3. Suggest another area where the person might excel. State a Decision Goal (*"I believe you could also excel in the area of___. Let's discuss that, so you can decide..."*). When you directly address areas of average performance, be careful to maintain the self-esteem of the employee and not imply a performance deficiency. The idea is to make good performers even better, to build strength on strength, not to give the impression of a "problem".
4. Discuss action steps needed to enhance performance in the new area. Lead to Neutral and above. Ask for suggestions and "play" with different approaches before closure at the biggest commitment the person will make today.
5. Summarize and express your confidence in the person. Summarize what will happen next and what you will do to provide support. Express your confidence that the person can do more tasks/work at a higher level of performance.

This information is taken from the booklet "Leading People for Quality Results", a practical and useful guide that can be used in conjunction with any PAR program to show participants how to apply PAR leadership skills to fourteen common management practices.