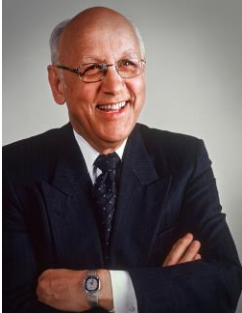




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Why Employees Fail

We must realize that while no employee sets out to be a bad employee, every company has its share of employees failing at the job. In the hiring process only the top candidates are selected for your organizations; yet, it is from these 'top candidates' that employee failure results. What is going on?

We must start this analysis by understanding three basic points:

- Humans are very delicate creatures
- Humans behaviours follow a pattern and messing up that pattern can lead to great difficulties
- Power corrupts

Let's examine each:

Delicate Creatures

Despite our bravura, our knowledge and our experience, each of us is very delicate. It doesn't take much for us to form our own self-doubts. We are quick to defend what little self-esteem we have left, if we feel unduly threatened. Great leaders such as Churchill, Lenin and Montgomery showed their moments of deep self-deprecation and doubt. We are all subject to self-doubt and the need to rebuild our temporary loss of self-esteem.

Humans Follow a Predictable Behaviour Pattern

As we have stated again and again, we humans are blessed (or cursed) with a temperamental behaviour pattern (which we describe as some combination of P, A, V and F) – a pattern that is predictable. More importantly, what we can expect is that if we are in an environment where our temperament is put to good use, we become happy, whereas if we are in a poor environment for us, we become miserable. The temperamental misfit at work can be just as severe as asking a soprano to sing a bass note. In the work environment it is expecting the V to like paying attention to detailed forms (which they abhor) or asking the A to swallow a surprise change in circumstances in their stride (which frightens them no end).

Power Corrupts

This famous phrase describes how we humans subscribe to the lift in our ego of a new position or responsibility and, as a result, often cannot resist riding high with this boost to our self-esteem. That is, we take it to extremes by lording this new-found power over other individuals. Whether this be a lower-level employee given a new responsibility or perhaps an officer given powers over the public (customs officer, airport security, or police), the power trip is sometimes difficult to resist.

These three points are constants. You are tempted or affected by all three personally, and so is everyone else. Ergo, everyone in your company is affected in one way or another by the three human frailties.

Managing for Results

Good management is about understanding what is at play and therefore, how you can take steps to ensure that:

- (a) your own behavior works successfully around these three points and
- (b) your treatment of the people who report to you takes all three frailties into serious account.

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Here is how we suggest you proceed.

Delicate Creatures

The amygdala that fires at a rate up to 100 times faster than our logic processor is in place to protect us (and all mammals) from threats. And it works very well; we humans have danced around threats of war and pestilence for eons to the point where we are 7 billion strong and growing. The amygdala fires at the tiniest threat. Two key triggers in the everyday work environment that will shoot off the defensive amygdala is the use of the word 'you' or any action that 'blames' the employee. When an employee is under threat two things happen, neither of which is good for the work situation:

- (a) they dig in to defend themselves, and
- (b) they reduce their cooperation.

We say that 'blaming' will always lead you away from a solution. Secondly we say that increased cooperation leads to success; reduced cooperation leads to failure. Which road will you choose to take?

As a leader, the way to avoid 'you' is to, instead, use 'we' when confronting a difficulty with an employee because it really is 'we' who have the problem and 'we' who must solve it. "Obviously if something is not working out, I as your supervisor failed to instruct you properly, or make clear my expectations" or the supervisor did not assess the employee's capabilities for this situation correctly. Therefore 'we' need to work on it. "And by the way, employee, what do you suggest we do?" (At this point the supervisor can get away with the use of 'you' because the word 'you' is being applied positively). Using 'we' conveniently skirts around the 'blame' issue every time.

Humans Follow a Predictable Behaviour Pattern

As a leader you must assess the PAVF behavior pattern for every employee who reports to you. Then slowly and deliberately steer the individual towards work within their own PAVF domains. That is, give more P work to a P, more A work to an A, etc. Naturally you cannot have a perfect fit, but you can make drastic improvements in workers' lives and in your own as they start to excel in areas of natural habits for them. One of the biggest misfits that I encounter is companies choosing to put F personalities in a sales role. They are put there because F's are so 'nice'. Sales roles demand a PV personality; the F person, despite all efforts, may be doomed to fail at sales. Secondly, you must have tolerance for those who are not like you. Let the P be a P, let the V be a V, and so on. While it may amaze you that they cannot do the things that you can do (because you have your own unique PAVF), do realize that:

- (a) you need all of PAVF in play,
- (b) you cannot expect people's PAVF to change.

Power Corrupts

The answer to excessive power temptation lies in being humble yourself. Accept your new post or your new responsibility with thanks - thanks that your personality and capability is such that your superior values it enough to pass on increased responsibilities to you. Remember that, as stated above, everyone under you is a delicate creature and has a built-in behaviour pattern that you must work with and turn to your advantage. Remember that just as you cannot push a rope, you cannot push employees. You have to pull them, that is, to lead them through thoughtful interaction and engage in the necessary nurturing to bring them to full maturity as a successful employee.

Herein lies the full remedy for every employee.

Good luck!
Bill

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