

The RESOURCE

PROMOTING COMPETENT LEADERS

One of the most difficult yet most important tasks for managers is to promote competent leaders. Managers know that an in-house promotion can be a boost to employee morale, showing workers that there can be advancement and upward mobility in the company, as well as opportunity for professional growth and development.

Promoting the Wrong Person

Too often, however, managers promote the wrong person. The reasons for doing so are varied. In many cases, managers promote the best worker, believing that a person who excels at a lower position will do likewise at a higher position. In fact, studies show that 70 percent of internally promoted first-level supervisors obtained their jobs because they were “the best worker.” The problem with this approach is that the skills needed in the higher position are very different from the skills required in the lower position. Thus, promoting the “best worker” often results in two errors: loss of an excellent worker at one level and selection of a supervisor who is ill-equipped to do the job.

Some managers promote an employee who is popular or well liked. The thinking behind this approach is that employees are more inclined to follow the lead of a person they get along with and whose company they enjoy. Managers also may believe that promoting a popular person means that there will be less unrest, contention, and conflict in the ranks. Unfortunately, popularity in management works effectively only in the good times. When times get tough and difficult decisions need to be made, people get hurt and popularity fades.

Gauging Promotability

Another reason given to promote a person is seniority. Managers like to promote the person who has demonstrated longevity, loyalty, and consistency. As the “next person in line,” the thinking goes, this individual *deserves* to be promoted. The mistake here, of course, is that a promotion is being used as a reward. There are many other ways to acknowledge loyal service or seniority. Success in a leadership position has little to do with “putting in your time” in a lower position.

The best reason to promote in-house workers is that they demonstrate leadership skills. In other words, they display the ability to see beyond their current responsibilities and to facilitate the accomplishment of larger goals. On a practical basis, this means that several capabilities are exemplified:

- ❖ Taking initiative/setting direction
- ❖ Acting with integrity
- ❖ Displaying sound judgment
- ❖ Motivating people
- ❖ Maintaining poise in pressured situations
- ❖ Driving for results

If individuals display none of the above-mentioned capabilities in their current job assignments, it is unlikely that they will exhibit them when they are promoted. Therefore, people need chances to reveal the leadership qualities cited above. This is one reason that job enrichment activities are so important in a person’s current job assignment. Expanding an employee’s current role to include opportunities to practice leadership provides one gauge of promotability.

Psychometric Testing Fills in Gaps

However, job enrichment activities in leadership skills are not always available.

This is where psychometric testing comes in. Well-constructed psychometric tests measure specific leadership attributes and compare employees to national or same-industry benchmarks in each attribute. Thus, psychometric test results fill in gaps in information about an employee’s promotability. This information gives decision-makers more confidence in the choices they make and reduces errors in employee promotion.

Job knowledge, good work habits, popularity, or seniority do not, in themselves, ensure success in leadership roles. Skills in setting direction, motivating people, maintaining poise, and driving for results are necessary. Add integrity and critical thinking to the list, and you have the formula for leadership. With the proper tools, each of these important leadership skills can be measured. PSP’s psychometric tools help managers identify and promote competent leaders.



COACHING FOR FASTER DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE GAINS

Coaching is a required skill for managers in order to achieve results through others. Your job as a manager is to coach employees' performance, analyze whether the results have been achieved, and give the appropriate feedback so that employees can make adaptations in their actions to achieve performance goals.

Coaching ultimately is about raising performance.

The actions of a coach vary and include:

- ❖ Helping employees develop their skills, better utilize their strengths, and increase their personal and career growth to be more effective on the job.
- ❖ Giving assignments, providing resources, and sharing knowledge.
- ❖ Providing feedback on the effectiveness of corrective actions taken.
- ❖ Offering advice and support, and asking questions to help employees develop the skills and work behaviors necessary for achieving success.



Managers will discover that by developing and coaching their staff, employee enthusiasm and commitment will rise along with overall company performance.

Dr. Frederick Herzberg

www.pspmetrics.com/newsletters/Herzberg.pdf

In addition to improved job performance, successful **coaching brings benefits for both employees and managers.**

For the employee, coaching increases employee job satisfaction, retention, and productivity. For the manager, coaching provides an opportunity for delegation and the satisfaction of watching employees grow. While coaching initially can seem like a lot of work, ultimately it provides time savings with the growth of the employee's capabilities and the opportunity for managers to hand off additional job tasks so that they can focus on other priorities.

It is your job as a manager to assess and coach performance, give appropriate feedback, and reinforce the desired actions and results. It is the employee's responsibility to take the necessary action to improve his or her performance and achieve the expected job results. Results alone, however, are not sufficient, as there must be equal emphasis placed on **how** the results are achieved.

The Importance of Behavioral Skills and Accurate Feedback

How results are achieved—the behavioral skills used to achieve the results—typically are called competencies. They include behaviors such as leadership, planning and organizing, resilience, and customer orientation. Using these behavioral skills enables the employee to be successful in many important ways and, equally important, avoid many problems caused by not using effective behavioral skills in the workplace. Therefore, it is important that the manager focus coaching on the competencies, that is, how the results are achieved, as well as on the actual achievement of the results.

The first step in improving competencies in an individual is to measure them. A 360 survey can be an excellent tool for this purpose. In fact, finding out how one is perceived by his/her key constituencies in a company actually can motivate a person to improve. Therefore, many coaches use 360 surveys to gather accurate, objective data about a person's behavioral strengths and improvement needs.

PSP offers its customers customized 360 surveys that prioritize important developmental areas.

Customized training plans are also available to provide ideas and direction for development. With accurate feedback and coaching, employees are motivated to make developmental changes faster and to improve their contribution to company performance.

THE VALUE OF DOUBLE-ENTRY NOTE TAKING

A Guest Article by Roy Haley

***“Thinking is the hardest thing we do ...
... but writing may be even harder.”***

“The only way to have a good idea, is to have a lot of them.” This quote, attributed to Thomas Edison, is one of my favorites. A likely corollary would be, “If you have a lot of ideas, it is hard to remember or revisit them unless you get into the habit of writing them down.”

I don’t know whether I have any more ideas than the next person, but I can definitely generate many more ideas or thoughts than I can remember. In an effort to compensate for this memory problem, I long ago became a compulsive note taker, which is probably not a bad thing for the kind of work that I do. It is not unusual for me to develop three or four pages of cryptic notes in any meeting of 30 minutes or more. I make notes on other people’s presentations, in the margins of books and magazine articles, on the back of business cards of people I meet, and on tablets or Post-It notes of all types. For me, note taking is a natural, habitual activity. What is unnatural, at least from my perspective, is to go to a meeting and find that everyone has a pad and pen, but no one is taking notes.

Refining and Expanding Your Thoughts

I hate to admit it, but my handwritten notes are hard to follow, and many times, I can’t decipher my own handwriting or figure out what was so important or interesting to me just a few hours or a few days ago. So, many years ago, I learned a technique and a discipline of what I once heard someone describe as double or triple-entry note taking. What in the world is that? Well, it is simply a process of taking the time to go through your rough notes, then reorganizing, re-sequencing, re-editing, and expanding them. The first time through this process is what I refer to as double-entry note taking. Repeating the process on your refined set of notes and ideas and further expanding your thoughts would then represent triple-entry note taking.

*You write first for understanding,
and then for communication.*

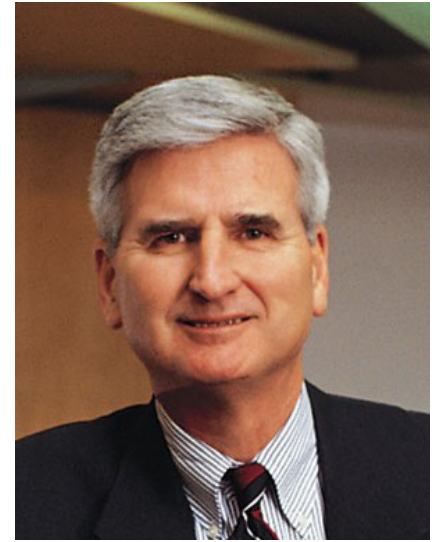
Double-entry note taking sounds like a lot of work, and it is. It forces you to think. Taking the time to write down your ideas and thoughts forces out an improved understanding and a better overall command over the ideas or concepts that you are

considering. Writing about and re-editing a problem or an interesting idea forces out key points, logical linkages, contradictions or omissions, and possibly a revision or addition to your original idea. Over the years, I have learned the value in the saying, “you write first for understanding, and then for communication.” For me, this means that you keep repeating the double-entry note taking process or re-editing your notes, memos, or letters until you believe you have a complete understanding of the material. If a little bell goes off in the back of your mind saying, “this just doesn’t sound right,” that is a clear message that you need to do more to re-think or re-edit your work product. Don’t rush to get it off your desk. If something tells you that it is not quite right, trust your instincts. In almost all cases, other people will reach the same conclusion ... “that is not quite right.” Writing helps to develop a more complete understanding, and I have found that when I can’t write things out clearly and concisely, there is usually an underlying confusion, inconsistency, or data problem.

Leaving a Better First Impression

Professionals in most fields of business are judged by the end product of their work. For consultants, it is a report on their analysis and recommendations. For lawyers, it is their legal brief or filing. For sales professionals, it is their customer correspondence, proposals, or responses to requests for quote. Impressions that others have about the quality of our written work clearly influence the way they evaluate us and our company. In my opinion, all of us can leave a better first impression by continuously working to improve our fact-finding, note taking, and written analyses and communications.

Roy Haley is the Chairman and CEO of WESCO Distribution. This article, originally written by Mr. Haley for internal use at WESCO, dovetails with PSP’s ideas on self-development and is printed here with his permission.



WHAT'S NEW @ PSP

RESOURCES FOR LEADERS



In ***Think Better: An Innovator's Guide to Productive Thinking***, Tim Hurson presents a model for effective thinking to help companies and individuals reach solutions for tough problems. The book details his original brainstorming tools to help individuals develop and organize ideas, then use them to create a concrete action plan for dealing with problems.

"The Benefits of a Coaching Culture" in *MIT Sloan Management Review* (Winter 2007) gives a brief synopsis of a research project by Ritu Agarwal, Corey M. Angst and Massimo Magni on "The Performance Effects of Coaching." Based on a study of the sales force at a multinational manufacturer, they concluded that coaching increases performance, productivity and job satisfaction at all levels.

Babson College professors James M. Hunt and Joseph R. Weintraub present what they have learned from best-practice cases in ***The Coaching Organization: A Strategy for Developing Leaders***. The book is aimed at leaders interested in "building an organizational coaching capability, a systematic approach to using developmental coaching to help achieve business results."

Learn about the benefits of PSP's paired comparison 360 surveys in an earlier *Resource* article, **"360 Surveys: Not Created Equal,"** available at www.pspmetrics.com/newsletters/Fall2006.pdf.

Promoting competent leaders is facilitated by the use of well-constructed psychometric testing. Read about PSP's approach to executive and management screening in **"Selecting Senior Executives,"** available at www.pspmetrics.com/newsletters/Fall2007.pdf.



For recommendations on training resources on any management topic, contact PSP directly.

- ❖ Sponsored the first nationwide Survey of Recruitment and Retention Issues with female power system operators.
- ❖ Provided a hands-on Leadership Workshop for a senior executive meeting of a large family business.
- ❖ Added six additional electric utility companies to PSP's customer list.
- ❖ Conducted a CEO Communication Survey with the Board of Directors of a family-owned holding company.
- ❖ Consulted on selection of top executives for companies in the growing transportation and logistics sector.
- ❖ Conducted mid-management 360s and developmental training plans for a large North American manufacturing company.
- ❖ Gave permission for use of a *Resource* article, "Eight Habits of Effective Critical Thinkers," in classes for senior military officers, federal civilians and industry managers at the Department of Defense's Defense Acquisition University.
(Read the article at www.pspmetrics.com/newsletters/Spring2005/pdf.)



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