

Training a Top Performer

Different Emphasis

Is there any difference in the way you train a top performer, compared with less effective employees?

Yes, indeed there is. And this applies to existing, as well as to new employees, of course. So let us examine some of these differences.

Performer Defined

Firstly, to be absolutely sure of what we are talking about, let's define a "performer":-

A performer is an individual who consistently achieves results. They know what the end results are, and always measure their performance and progress towards achieving those results in order to correct and improve.

Suppose the stated purpose of the job is to ensure rapid delivery of goods to customers from a warehouse facility.

The top performer will:-

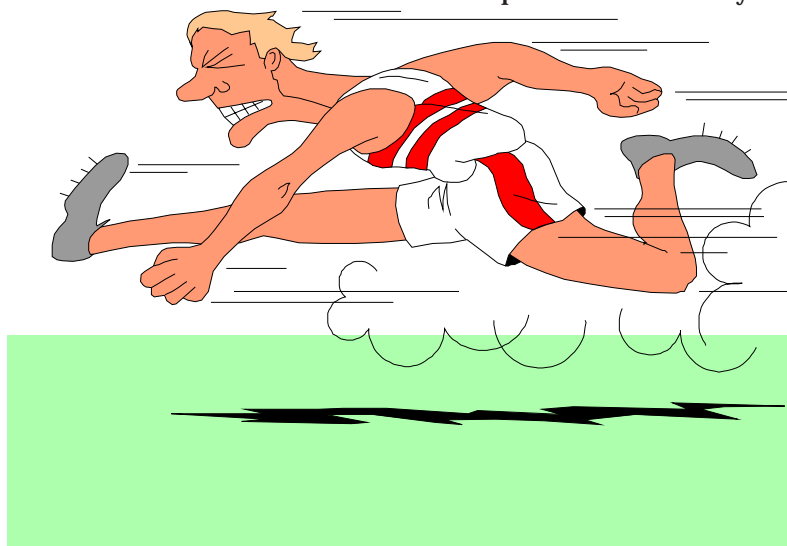
1. Keep the purpose of the operation firmly in mind. They will know what they are trying to accomplish.
2. Apply the knowledge and experience they have to overcome the problems & barriers which hinder this purpose.

3. Measure their results, month to month. For example, they may tell you that last year it took 2.6 working days to deliver from the warehouse, whereas now it only takes 1.3. And they would tell you that with some degree of pride.

The non-performer, on the other hand, will:-

1. Lose sight of the purpose (or not even see it in the first place).
2. Get mired down in the problems and barriers.
3. Become quite defensive about their performance when tackled on the subject.
4. Be unable to tell you how long it takes to deliver products to customers, because non-performers rarely know the statistical measure of their job.

There is a vast difference in operating basis between a top performer and a non-performer. And this means you must approach the training of such people quite differently.



Training a Performer

There is a delicate balance one needs to be aware of when training a top performer. That balance is to do with how much and what type of information you feed them.

1. If they don't get the vital information they need in order to perform the job, they will

Training a Top Performer

not start to operate. They can even be very demanding when this happens.

2. If you don't let them go when they consider they have enough data and are ready to "solo", you will only get in their way.



Don't Get in the Way

There is a lot to be said for the old adage; "Why keep a dog and bark yourself".

In training the top performer, they will reach a point where they have enough knowledge and understanding to operate with, and that's the point at which you should back off. They may not know it all yet, but they have enough to begin operating. And you should let them go for it.

If you try to stay on the line and continue "training" them, beyond the point where they are ready to give it a go, you will stifle them.

Vital Information

Remember that the top performer always has the **results** in his or her sights. They **know** where they are trying to go. But if there is data missing which is vital to achieving those results, they will do whatever is necessary to get their hands on that needed information.

The non-performer will just sit back and wait, not realising how important the missing data is to the overall achievement. Either that, or they will attempt to start operating with insufficient knowledge and consequently make a mess of it.

So, in training, make sure that the top performer has access to all the data necessary to performing their job. You have to assume the viewpoint of someone who is only interested in getting results in their new area. Then, ask yourself this question: "What data is vital to achieving those results?". That's what you need to give them.

By contrast, when training a not-so-top performer, you have to do much more preparatory work. You have to direct that person's attention to the **purpose** of the job and the results they are supposed to be achieving. You have to do some of the thinking for them. The top performer picks these things up much faster.

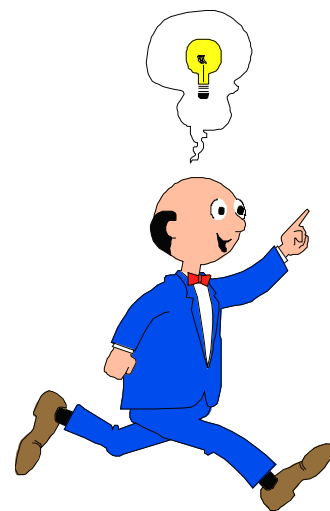
Mistakes

Will the top performer make mistakes? Of course they will, but there is an interesting point here.

Mistakes and errors are a learning experience for the top performer.

Effective people do actually learn from their mistakes. They are results-oriented, so keep their eye on the target. Therefore, they want to know **why** they miss, when they do. Only in that way can they get the bright ideas that will correct their operation and improve the results.

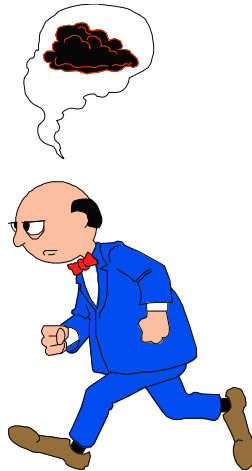
You could even say that, for a top performer, mistakes and errors are actually therapeutic!



Training a Top Performer

Mistakes for a non-performer, however, can be quite a different story.

The non-performer does not have a clear idea of the end results they are supposed to be producing. It is therefore hard for them to learn by their mistakes. They are just as likely to make the same mistake over and over again.



4. Allow them to make mistakes early in the job, as these will lead to effective correction.

The biggest error one can make in training a top performer is, in fact, to **not** let them get on with it when they are ready.

Once you have a top performer, be sure you train them properly.

When to Let Go

The top performer should be given enough data to begin operating, and then allowed to get on with it.

Further training and information may be required as they progress, of course. But you should not try to give it all to them in one long and intensive education exercise before they even start.

Let them have a go. Let them make the odd mistake — they will learn from them and enhance the results they are able to achieve. Their value to your operation will, in turn, be increased.

Summary

So, in summary, the key points in training a top performer are:-

1. Give them the data they need, making sure this includes all of the results-critical information.
3. When they feel they are ready to start, get out of the way so they can perform.

