

Underachieving Employees- Quick Tips

by Dr. Brian Grossman

Most of us have some employees who simply do not consistently apply effort and who are working far below their potential. Their problem is not ability, but attitude. They deny that what they do now has any impact on tomorrow. They are Underachievers.

In the past, when we did not have labor shortages to contend with, we would most often make some attempt to work with those persons. And when that attempt failed, and it usually did, we would just let those people go. Not so anymore. We need every employee we can recruit and then some. We can't afford to let people go anymore.

The Corporate Performance Doctor was founded upon the understanding that a person's level of achievement is more a result of personality development than level of natural ability. Although each individual is unique, there are four developmental levels of underachievement. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and are often overlapping. So how can you tell if an individual is an Underachiever?

Underachievers have the ability to do substantially better work than they are doing, but they lack certain basic attributes:

The ability to work to completion. Underachievers start things well, then lose interest, even in things they say they want.

The ability to function independently. When Underachievers are closely supervised they can do very good work, but when the supervision stops, so do their efforts.

The ability to produce within time limits. If classic Underachievers are told "Have that project done by Friday," on Friday they are likely to say, "I thought you meant *next* Friday."

These categories are not mutually exclusive. The key to working with an underachieving employee is the application of consistent supervision, training, and effort.

Quick Tip One

If you want to identify under-performing employees, look for the following signs:

- Employees who commit to projects they cannot finish
- They volunteer for projects they are not qualified to perform
- Require constant handholding throughout a project
- Blaming others when they are unable to follow through
- Compulsive with behaviors unrelated to task completion such as cleaning the desk, re-arranging files
- Breaking rules just because they want to
- Angry attitude when not in compliance

Quick Tip Number Two

When encountered with Under-performing employees a Supervisor must:

- Clarify the employee's role

Define for the employee specific job responsibilities and a clearly define how the employee should act independently or within the team dynamics as necessary.

- Clarify how the employee's performance has an effect on the rest of the team
- Explain how the team's under-performance has an effect on other teams at work.
- Explain how the employee's performance has an effect on their team, other teams, and the organization as a whole.

Quick Tip Number Three

Under-performers have had a lifetime learning how to not meet expectations. They require more than a two week intervention. A goal setting guide can be effective. With an under-performing employee goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and within a specific time frame. Employers who have followed this guidelines have been successful in turning under-performing employees into average or above average employees.

- Set Daily goals
- Set Weekly goals
- Set Monthly goals
- Set Quarterly goals

Goals setting that is specific to this level enhances the performance of under-performing employees. After a period of 90 to 120 days Under-performers begin consistently attaining or exceeding expectations in the work place. While this is initially more work for a supervisor, it involves much less work than re-hiring, training new employees on a consistent basis.

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