



Improving the bottom
... line through people

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Building the Competence to Embrace Risk

The Dreaded Performance Evaluation: Test your risk resilience during the annual performance evaluation process

Is there a natural resistance to evaluation? Have you ever said to yourself, "Drat! It's that time of year again for my annual performance evaluation." Don't feel alone in wishing to retreat from this dubious treat ... because you're not.

With the exception of public speaking, few things bring up as much dread as the notorious performance evaluation. No matter how much you've accomplished, how extraordinary people say you are in your job or how good-natured your relationship is with your boss, most of us experience a heightened sense of anxiety around performance evaluations.

The performance evaluation process can feel like the pop quizzes that college professors would surprise you with when you hadn't done all of the reading. In your decision not to read the chapters you assumed a high degree of risk that the professor might not spring a quiz on you. It's not so different during the performance evaluation process. You're sitting in front of your boss, you hear some good things, all the bad things, and this is against the backdrop of the new things you'll be asked to do too!

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Untapped and Underutilized: The Facilitator As Project Manager

You're looking for a different way to make this year's planning retreat successful and to carry forward the key take-aways that will energize your team, engage them as active participants in the change agenda, and develop a guiding infrastructure. What might this difference be? How about the facilitator as project manager?

The Facilitator Redefined

Say the word facilitation and outdated images come to mind. The facilitator is a short-term "firefighter," called upon to identify certain issues or resolve specific conflicts. Next, facilitation is seen as a "hit and run" profession. Once their short-term duties are complete, the facilitator leaves with a wealth of untapped information about everything from key stakeholders and intersecting resource streams, to potentially beneficial alliances. The possibilities of redefining facilitation and using a facilitator in the much broader, long-term role of project manager include:

- More Effective Time Management
You don't have time. It takes 10 to 15 percent of your time to implement the actions from a strategic plan. The facilitator as project manager can co-design a long-term strategic plan, and save you precious time by developing the detail level business infrastructure that updates and makes your systems flexible, keeps your team on task, and achieves your goals.
- Stakeholder Analysis As Inside Information
In their pre-meeting stakeholder analysis, facilitators surface valuable behind-the-scenes information. When combined, this insider information and the facilitator's "outsider" or "neutral perspective," give rise to the kind of actionable intelligence that insures authentic buy-in, goal directed participation and successful completion.
- The "Big Picture" Perspective

With insider information and an outsider's perspective, the facilitator as project manager helps you identify emerging

trends, align resources, establish key partnerships, heads off hot-button issues, and realizes long term goals.

From Commitment Makers to Commitment Keepers

The facilitator as project manager coordinates team efforts, monitors benchmarks, and establishes accountability protocols. As project manager, the facilitator provides the long term analysis, coaching and commitment to excellence that insure efficiency is maximized, buy-in is authentic, and profitability is achieved.

IN SUM, long-term facilitation remains a largely untapped and under utilized resource. The facilitator as project manager can help you move from concept through implementation and to completion.

—Darryl W. Hewitt, Ph.D. and David Matsuda, Ph.D.

The Diverse Workplace Series: Coaching to Build Competence

Getting in Touch: Enable White Supervisors with Cultural Competence

Showing-Up Culturally Competent

Are your white supervisors showing up and equipped with the right skills to use in their daily work interactions with employees of color? "Showing up" is a coaching term that describes when a person, or in this case, a supervisor, is totally committed as a leader. They're fully present and possess the tools to interact effectively with employees of color. Showing up also suggests that you're leaving nothing on the field, you're sincere in your attempts to make a connection and have a real impact in the supervisor-employee of color paradigm. If you're hearing repeated complaints about your supervisors' inability to interact effectively with employees of color, is it because they lack the cultural competence to fully show up in their role?

In today's businesses, it's not enough for supervisors to merely model the work behaviors desired. While white supervisors may work along-side employees of color, it doesn't mean that they know how to straddle the chasm of being effective communicators, especially with employees from diverse cultural backgrounds. An increasingly diverse workforce demands that white supervisors develop the skills to allow them to interact with employees of color and cultural differences.

Some leading authorities contend that differences in race or culture should make no difference. All supervisors, regardless of background, should possess effective communications skills. You'll get no argument here, but

as white supervisors hope to become familiar with the complexity of leading a diverse workforce, they will need to understand the nuances of cultural differences. Understanding this, a white supervisor can identify routine workplace transactions that can erupt into communication breakdowns, grievances, law suits and sometimes, even violence. Acquiring cultural competence gives supervisors the skills to identify potential problems and intervene early in the process, restoring balance in the workplace before cultural incompetence has had a chance to take root and grow out of proportion.

Historically, employees of color are in a unique position to recognize unfair treatment when they see it. Employees form impressions about the workplace based on the quality of the interaction between themselves and their immediate supervisors. If a white supervisor bungles routine matters, ignores reasonable requests, or shows little or no respect towards people of color, your company may become a target of criticism.

Like any worker, employees of color prefer to settle differences with someone who can comprehend their perspectives, relate to them as an individuals and who can see the world in many of the same ways they do. A culturally responsive supervisor can do that. The supervisor makes it his or her business to acquaint himself with the issues affecting employees, understands diverse cultural nuances and is equipped to respond to events in a fair and even-handed manner. Culturally competent supervisors aren't born; they're built, one person at a time.

Managing With the Wrong Idea in Mind

Too often, a well-intentioned manager can miss opportunities to gain credibility with employees of color. They'll make an off-the-cuff remark, relay inappropriate jokes, or violate an employee's humanity by devaluing them; showing little or no respect for them as a human being and keep them at a metaphorical distance from the core group. These acts embody the essence of cultural incompetence and diminish the supervisor's ability to influence people of color in already demanding work environments.

Seven criticisms that are frequently leveled at culturally incompetent supervisors are:

- they apply double standards in evaluating white and non-white employee performance,
- they stereotype non-white worker's performance by their cultural heritage,
- they discipline non-white workers more severely,
- they display little or no confidence in their non-white worker's abilities,
- they condemn an entire group of people for one individuals mistake,
- they show favoritism towards white workers in performance evaluations, merit awards, and work assignments, and
- they promote white workers with less work experience and qualifications.

Perception is everything. Repeated offenses without action by senior leaders might suggest a disregard for employees of color as well as the possibility of a work culture that discriminates. Although the majority of companies don't sanction inappropriate management behavior, indifference in the face of seemingly inappropriate behavior will leave

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Building the Competence to Embrace Risk

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Can you ever feel a greater sense of personal empowerment inside of the performance evaluation process?

Even if your work was stellar, you're reluctant to assume or embrace risk. When you think about it, it's understandable, predictable and natural. When it comes to the performance evaluation process, many of us deem ourselves powerless because our perception of risk holds us hostage. With that attitude, it's not surprising that so many people opt to leave well enough alone rather than assume greater risk in negotiating their performance evaluations. But our own resistance to take on the process suggests a distortion, rather than uncovering and looking at the real concern, what you've made the process mean. What steps can we take to build risk resilience?

Identifying Your Personal Perception of Risk

Resistance to take on negotiating the performance evaluation comes in numerous forms. In weighing the options, one pushback, or way of avoiding risk, is that people prefer surviving and living in comfort rather than taking a chance and putting themselves at risk. Why risk trouble -- shouldn't we let sleeping dogs lie? If you are operating at the level of survival, risk -- which also holds rewards -- can't occupy the same space as comfort.

Underneath the surface, there are a few, powerful operating beliefs. First, there's an assumption that money offers you freedom. In reality, your ability to choose is the only real freedom. Second, many organizational cultures don't promote the idea that they want their employees to negotiate their performance evaluations. Often, we begin to question ourselves and ask, "If I step outside of the norm, what're the risks?"

A second way of avoiding risk is the belief that we have, "No voice in the performance evaluation process." Quite often we hear "I can't do this on my own,"

from our coaching clients. Our cultural conditioning teaches us to avoid rather than invite risk. We give away our power by staying inside of our comfort zone, we shrug our shoulders and say, "My boss concocted the process," when things don't go our way. Often the real culprit, our apprehension of risk, operates at the level of our belief system, gives us our occurring world, and holds us hostage to a predetermined course of action. In other words, we may have already made a decision even before considering the options.

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For instance, many African Americans avoid taking risk in the performance evaluation process. What's often missing for us is a lack of risk resilience. Some of this resistance may be traced to our historical and pathological patterns, often opting to ask for less or nothing at all, rather than take on risk. This way of avoiding risk is often revealed in coaching conversations in which the client doesn't feel fully self-expressed. If we get "derailed" by the unanticipated news flash of a poor performance evaluation, it comes as a big surprise.

A third way of avoiding risk can be our need to look good and avoid looking bad. One particular client held the notion that approaching the boss about her performance evaluation would make her look bad and feel embarrassed. Once her fear was distinguished through coaching,

she began to experience a fully self-expressed relationship with her boss and her performance at work.

These are a few examples of the ways we avoid taking on risk in the performance evaluation process.

Building Capacity to Become Risk Resilient

Now, imagine if you walked into your boss's office and said, "I am requesting your support in negotiating my annual performance evaluation. How does that set with you?" What kind of response to do you think that you'd get? Would it be, "Just who does s/he think they are? We don't do things that way around here!" Or, "I'm here to help, let's roll up our sleeves. We're in this together."

A good framework to begin negotiating your performance evaluation with the boss may start off as follows:

What do I plan to accomplish?

What does my supervisor expect me to accomplish?

Am I capable of doing what I said I'd do?

What support and resources do I need from my supervisor to accomplish his/her expectations?

What is the potential pay off if I do a good job?

While you may not have complete control over the outcomes of your performance evaluations, you do have influence in the relationship. Your capacity to overcome your resistance and build your risk resilience can help you in producing dramatic results, not only in the performance evaluation process, but also in other areas at work and life.

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Getting in Touch: Enable White Supervisors with Cultural Competence

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employees of color with the impression that they do -- particularly since employees perceive supervisors as the designated agents of the company as a whole.

Defining Cultural Competence

So what does it take for white supervisors to exercise competence? Just how can they transform their speaking and listening skills to increase the value-exchange between themselves and employees of color?

Practicing and acquiring cultural competence has less to do with political correctness, playing race cards or giving preference. It has more to do with understanding differences, appreciating cultural diversity and applying good business sense. As the marketplace becomes increasingly diverse, companies need white supervisors to become grounded in the principles of competence not only to improve their relationships with employees, but with that of an increasingly diverse customer base as well. If companies hope to persuade employees of color that they're valued, respected and appreciated, culturally competent supervisors are fast becoming mandatory for today's work environment.

Costing Out Incompetence

Not leveraging the intellectual capital of your entire workforce can be expensive to your business, with potential losses in revenue, higher employee turnover, and grievances filed against your company. Recent class-action lawsuits by employees of color against Boeing, Texaco, Ford and General Motors to name a few, illustrate the importance of preparing white supervisors for the new work force.

To lay the foundation within your supervisory ranks, here are 10

guidelines to strengthen the cultural competence paradigm within your organization:

1. Create a company-wide philosophy of Cultural Competence for Supervisors.
2. Develop organizational policies to support a culturally friendly work environment.
3. Determine the minimum requirements of Supervisors to demonstrate Cultural Competence.
4. Evaluate the Cultural Competency of Supervisors as part of the regular performance evaluation process.
5. Require Supervisors to take leadership courses on interacting effectively with people of color.
6. Conduct routine evaluations of your instructional strategies to improve their effectiveness.
7. Establish an organizational infrastructure to support Supervisors in achieving Cultural Competence.
8. Familiarize Supervisors on the impact of their personal style in encouraging Cultural Competence.
9. Emphasize good feedback as a basis to improve Supervisor's Cultural Competence.
10. Provide a range of formal and informal learning experiences to enrich Their Cultural Competence toolkit.

Starting at the Top

Your company has the opportunity to get supervisors in touch with employees of color. If you want a new relationship with employees of color, desire a satisfied workforce and envision increases in productivity ... begin with the development of a team of culturally competent supervisors!

Being invested in the competence of

your supervisors means giving them the confidence to interact effectively with employees of color, the relatedness to evoke an esprit de corps within your staff and the power to generate healthy relationships in today's diverse workforce.

The benefits are manifold; besides reducing potential legal liabilities and improving the bottom-line, your organization will enjoy the view of being regarded not only as a socially responsible and a productive place to work for employees of color, but also as workplace attractive to everyone for its integrity and vision.

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Quarterly

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