



Management and Performance Associates – Feb 2005

The Lion and the Gazelle

A few days ago, we received a letter in our inbox, which at first sight, seemed to be just another funny tale, but proved to be one with a very powerful message. This is the story:

In Africa, every morning the gazelle wakes up. She knows she has to run faster than the lion, or she will be devoured.

In Africa, every morning the lion wakes up. He knows he has to run faster than the gazelle, which is slower, or he will starve. When the sun is up, it does not matter if you are the gazelle or the lion; you'd better start running...

Regardless of where we are in the productive chain, or which link we represent, each one of us has a clearly defined objective as we wake up each morning. The problem starts when we forget – or we don't want to remember – the reasons why we are getting out of bed.

If we do not have a sense of ownership and if we do not have a genuine commitment to the objectives and expectations, which are part of our performance agreement our actual achievements will be far below our potential ones. It is easy to notice when people or teams demonstrate a low level of commitment, because among other signs they:

1. Communicate in an ambiguous way regarding the direction and priorities of what needs to be done
2. Do not seem to understand the impact on others when they do not meet a deadline or make a decision without considering the consequences
3. Lose focus

4. Limit their creative and excellence potential

5. Blame and find excuses for errors

A fundamental part of the leader's job is to help people who work for him/her show a stronger commitment once again. These hints are sure to help you:

- **Communicate** clearly when delegating a task or establishing a goal. Explain what needs to be accomplished and why it is important. Don't assume they already know it. They don't. Ambiguity is eliminated when the message is prepared in this context.
- Make it clear, regardless of this person's job, how important the task will **contribute** to the overall results and to the success of the operations.
- **Stimulate** the person to contribute with opinions, points of view, alternate positions, concerns and ideas.
- **Align** the activities to be performed to the staff member's profile and sources of energy. There is nothing worse than to do something you don't like, without understanding why you are doing it, and knowing that nobody is interested in our input.

Finally, remember that people are committed to what they say, not to what they listen to!

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

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