



Management and Performance Associates – June 2011

"All right, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up."

The above line from Sunset Boulevard is perhaps one of the most quoted movie lines of all time. In case you haven't seen this American movie classic (and later a West End and Broadway musical) it's about Norma Desmond, an ageing actress from the silent movies who dreams of making a come-back in Hollywood. In one of the most dramatic scenes of the movie, she returns to the Paramount Studios imagining that the famous director will offer her a script to play when in reality the only thing the studio wants is to rent her rare vintage luxury car for a scene. In the following YouTube video clip from the movie you can see Gloria Swanson as the completely delusional Norma Desmond saying the famous line.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOLypkY8LMc>

Does this happen only in the movies? Unfortunately not. Life imitates art....Once, we heard of an employee who entered his boss's office convinced he was going to receive a bonus, only to hear that he was being fired.

What do these two stories have in common? A completely distorted view of reality. Norma Desmond became delusional and the employee who was thinking of the bonus, perhaps a little naïvely, developed false expectations over the months, because he didn't get honest and comprehensive feedback from his manager.

It's June, and therefore approaching the time for midyear reviews. Let's ensure that our staff's expectations are realistic by providing them honest feedback.

What if you haven't provided any feedback to your employee up 'til now?
Better late than never... Start by apologizing.

Strong leaders are humble enough to apologize. That will in turn increase the trust in the relationship. Learn from the occasion. Make notes in your Outlook calendar, and ensure that in the

future, you have more regular feedback sessions with your team.

Regardless of whether this is the first candid feedback session or not, these are recommendations to increase your leadership effectiveness:

1) Discuss year to date accomplishments versus goals

How is the employee performing against the previously agreed SMART goals? Are goals still realistic and achievable? What is preventing the employee from achieving them? In case you haven't done so at the beginning of the year, clarify which of the goals are most important to achieve.

2) Your numbers are good, but....

What about the famous "soft competencies?" How are they impacting performance? What is preventing the staff member from getting a great review at the end of the year? Most "delusional" employees perceive their performance as outstanding because they are exceeding their numbers while being blind to the behavioral competencies (not working in teams, not managing conflict in a positive way, damaging personal relationships with other areas of the company, etc) which impact performance.

3) State your expectations for the remaining months

The game isn't over. We still have six months ahead. It's only fair the employees know where they stand, so they have a chance to work on a plan to improve performance for the year.

4) Provide facts in case there is a gap in perception

Be prepared to support your assessment with facts and examples of observed behaviors. Avoid judgmental comments and always present the impact on performance. This is especially critical for employees that are not getting a clear vision of their performance.



Next time an employee says “I’m ready for my close up,” hopefully, it’s for a photo in the company newsletter where he/she has been chosen as employee of the month and all agree the reward is deserved.

See you next month. Suggestions are welcome.

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