

If the Job Could Talk...



By Bill J. Bonnstetter

JOB TALK

If a job could talk, it would explain precisely what was necessary to achieve superior performance. We could ask it to tell us about the:

- Knowledge a person needs,
- Personal attributes required to drive success,
- Rewards for superior performance,
- Hard skills vital for the job,
- Behaviors necessary to perform at peak levels and
- Intrinsic motivators.

But we all know that jobs can't talk. If they did, we would certainly hear the real story.

THE PROBLEM

Instead, we must get the truth from another source – subject matter experts. These are the people in and around a given job. But even asking people about a job presents a challenge.

Before we can learn the true meaning of superior performance for any particular job, the experts must remove

their natural biases. Bias is an unfair preference or dislike of something. Bias can create a blind spot — blocking out a single thing — or act like a set of blinders — making only one thing visible.

Unfortunately, biases get in the way of truly understanding job requirements. Over the years, we have learned that it is difficult –if not impossible– for subject matter experts to completely ignore their own bias. We also know that once subject matter experts do slice through their bias, they are able to hear the job talk. Once that happens, they can identify the key accountabilities or competencies for the job.

Only after they remove those natural biases can they deliver a true definition of superior performance for the given job.

THE SOLUTION

Removing bias can be the most formidable challenge in defining superior performance. In fact, we know that it is impossible to strip away

the bias without an impartial facilitator. An expert can spur a group into unbiased, fair discussion and act as a catalyst for developing a clear understanding of what superior performance looks like. In short, an expert facilitator will help subject matter experts hear a job talking.

THE RESULTS

The process leads to an understanding of the knowledge, intrinsic motivators, personal attributes, behaviors and hard skills required of each key accountability for the job in question. After the process, businesses can compare all current and new staff members to the results and provide a developmental plan for each. Development plans that are job related are much better than those based on one person's opinion.

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