

Planning Performance Counseling

*The best leaders let you know what they want **more of, less of, and same of.***

by Jack Lannom

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I like to use a four-part model: **Purpose, Principles, People and Plans**. I discussed the first two segments of the model--Purpose and Principles--last week, so I will provide just a brief review here and then move on to People and Plans.

Purpose: Begin the counseling session by establishing the purpose for the meeting.

Establish the goal: What are we trying to accomplish? What will constitute a successful exchange?

Principles: Before the meeting, the People First® Leader will give careful consideration to how he or she can best contribute to the staffer's growth. One way to do this is, prior to the meeting, conduct a brief **SWOT** (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats) exercise on the individual whom the leader is about to counsel. At the outset of every performance counseling session, the leader should review with the purpose partner the principles that will guide the conversation.

People: The leader makes every effort, during mental preparation and during the actual coaching session, to understand the purpose partner as an individual. Which personality style(s) does this individual reflect? The People First® Leader will never apply a "one size fits all" approach to making an emotional connection. The leader is dealing with the most important asset of the organization-- a human being --and so will concentrate on creating an environment of trust and transparency,

sensitivity and respect.

Plans: The leader lays out the **goals, objectives, and action steps** that will result from the meeting.

- Goals identify the over-reaching purpose to be accomplished. I recommend setting **SMART** goals -- goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound.
- Objectives are the steps we take along the road toward accomplishing the goals. Objectives are the different areas that contribute to the realization of the overall goal.
- The People First® Leader will list action steps under each objective. In these steps the leader and the purpose partner will determine how successful completion of the objectives will be measured.

Dr. Aubrey Daniels suggests a five-step formula for the creation of highly specific action steps. Here is the first step:

1. Pinpoint where you are now. This is the starting line, from which we begin to initiate the goals and objectives.

The leader will make sure to begin and end the session with a time of encouragement and affirmation, regardless of whether this is a "star" producer or a problem performer. It is essential to recognize contributions, and to highlight areas where there has been noticeable improvement, even if this improvement still does not place the staffer at the upper levels of productivity. Remember, the People First® Leader will reinforce the positive efforts, not make comparisons with perfection.

I would like to emphasize the critical importance of using precise language. The People First® Leader will **use precise language when providing reinforcement and correction.**

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For example:

"Harry, I'm pleased with your improvement this month. You're on track to deliver eight cars. That's going to put you right smack on the median line for our shift. I want you to keep working hard on your telephone prospecting, and set a goal for ten deliveries next month. That kind of improvement would place you in the top third for our group."

"John, your shift had eight per cent spoilage in October. That isn't a disaster, but you know we can't continue to run at that kind of waste. We've got to turn this around quickly. I'd like to see you get that number down to six per cent for November, and then down to five per cent for December. Let's meet tomorrow morning and break these numbers down further; perhaps we can isolate the problem."

"Great job, Marie! You're processing 45 claims a day. If you maintain this rate, you'll have a great shot at winning the Employee of the Month award." (This claims manager has just told Marie what he wants to see the "same of.")

Everyone appreciates receiving this kind of specific feedback.

Many managers adopt the "no news is good news" approach; many of the people who work for them feel like they're stumbling around in the dark! "We're supposed to have annual reviews, but I haven't had one in years," is a comment I hear *far* too often in the companies I visit. We've seen that extinction causes behavior to disappear. In the worst cases, extinction is the direct cause for *employees* disappearing! People who live or work in a culture that provides little or no reinforcement often become confused and resentful.

Using precise language is a very important part of performance counseling.

Your Success Coach
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Jack Lannom is an internationally known speaker, author, and consultant. He has served as a corporate coach for several Fortune 500 companies, including Citibank, R&R Donnelly and Sons, Jefferson Pilot Communications, Caterpillar, and also Knight-Ridder Newspapers and is featured on the PBS television program, "Lannom Memory Methods".

Jack is the author of *Untapped Potential*, *Transformational Coaching*, *Quantum Mind*, *Memory Genius*, *The Self-Concept Game*, *The Leaders Leader*, *You Are A Genius Children's Interactive Software*, *Lannom's Memory Methods*, *People First*, and *The Dynamics of Remembering Names and Faces*.

He's also a talented athlete who holds black belts in six different styles of Kung Fu, including a tenth degree black sash in Wa Lu. And Jack holds the world record for breaking a 3,150-pound block of ice with a single blow from his hand!

To learn more about Jack Lannom, visit his website here: JackLannom.com where you can sign up for his free newsletter, learn more about his products and read the next 25 pages of *People First*.