

## Who's to Blame for Poor Employee Performance?



"All in favor of blaming Dean Wimpey, raise your hands."

It seems obvious if you are a manager, doesn't it? It is definitely the employee! But ask an employee and they are likely to tell you it's their manager, or maybe even the company. Since employee performance has a **significant** impact on the performance of the company, the answer is critical to understand. Is it the employee, the manager, or possibly even the company itself? You may have guessed that it is all three! I know some will disagree so let me explain.

### The Employee?

Let's start with the easiest of the three - the employee. The attitude people bring to work plays a huge role in their performance. If they are motivated, optimistic, and open-minded, they will be more productive, innovative, and engaged. This isn't just the mindset they have at work, but the view they take on life as a whole. They are problem solvers, not victims; they are collaborative, not back-stabbers; and they look for possibilities, not excuses. At the end of the day, they get the job done and do it well. Their attitude is contagious and they positively influence those around them to raise the level of performance of their colleagues too. Interestingly, maintaining and strengthening this mindset also strongly depends on the *situation* they find themselves in at work.

## **The Manager?**

How about the manager? This person can easily make or break the ability of the employee to bring their best to work. We've all experienced it; the boss who ignores us, doesn't appreciate our work, doesn't provide feedback unless it's on our mistakes. They may even berate us in front of others. We leave work feeling like the life and joy have been sucked out of us. Compare this to the boss who cares about us, encourages and appreciates us, and wants us to succeed. They are interested in our ideas; they help us to use our strengths, to learn and grow and to see how our work contributes to the big picture. But an even bigger influencer is *the mindset of the manager*. Attitudes are contagious, and when it is the attitude of the boss, it has the biggest impact. Their moods can permeate the entire department. Our open limbic system and mirror neurons provide the physiological means for employees to be strongly affected by the boss's frustration, anxiety or even disengagement.

## **The Company?**

So that leaves the company. What I mean by "company" is the leaders, the policies, and the benefits - all those things that are out of control of the manager and the employee. Although there has been much attention put on "the company culture," it is our everyday work environment that has the biggest impact on our performance. Rather than focusing on the company culture itself (especially in bigger companies), how can the leaders provide policies and programs that support employees' personal development, fulfillment, and overall well-being? Here's the key - it's not just what the leaders do, but why they do it. All the training modules, recognition programs, and mission statements will only make a difference if people feel like the company cares; otherwise it is just empty gestures done to "check the box," which creates suspicion and distrust. Leaders need to take the time to sincerely understand the needs of their managers and employees and how they can best serve them. If leaders don't have time to connect with and care about their people, how can they expect their people to care about their work?

It's not about blame, but about employees, managers and the company taking responsibility for their roles in employee performance. When everyone can forget the "we" vs "them" mindset, the true potential of not only individuals, but of the entire organization can be realized. Work is more enjoyable and companies are more successful.