

PAIN ~~less~~
performance
improvement

PREVIEW

LEADER'S GUIDE

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PREVIEW

Introduction

This booklet is designed to orient you to the training program. While this booklet will get you started, it is not an in-depth discussion of the video or the participant materials. Your study of the DVD/video and the Manager's Workbook, including the manager's worksheets and reference section, will best prepare you to teach.

How to Use the Training Program

The Painless Performance Improvement Process is a flexible training program that can easily be customized to meet the needs of your managers and your company. The program can be used as self-study or in a class setting.

Self-Study Options

Managers who want to learn how to take the pain out of performance improvement discussions have two self-study options available in the Manager's Workbook: traditional self-study and colleague self-study. Both self-study approaches utilize the DVD/video and rely on activities and assessments in the workbook to enhance learning. Colleague self-study offers managers guidance if they choose to go through the self-study in small groups.

Note: *If you have managers who are going through the workshop as a self-study module, we encourage you to follow up with them and ensure that training is taking place.*

Class Setting Options

A class setting, when possible, is usually more effective than self-study. Interaction with an instructor and peers, when possible, allows for the exchange of ideas and experiences that can only enrich the learning.

This program can be delivered as a knowledge-based or skill-based class. While a skill-based workshop helps ensure transfer of training, we recognize that each company has varying training needs and time constraints. This booklet will help you customize the program for both classroom approaches.

Getting Started

While the DVD/video is the cornerstone of this training program, the Manager's Workbook augments and reinforces the learning. All the activities, case studies and assessments in the Manager's Workbook support the learning; your role is to create an interactive, non-threatening environment to promote the learning in a class setting.

We're not suggesting that you need to rewrite the self-study activities. Rather, you need to facilitate the activities during an interactive and fun workshop session. As you familiarize yourself with the Manager's Workbook, decide whether your workshop will be knowledge-based or skill-based. As you prepare for your workshop, use the Class Prep Worksheet as you decide how to best facilitate the content.

Class Setting - Knowledge-based

Depending on the number of managers who will attend the workshop, plan on approximately six hours for a knowledge-based session.

Class Setting - Skill-based

A skill-based program provides managers the most effective use of the training materials. If you'd like your managers to practice the painless performance improvement process and model the skills illustrated in the DVD/video, plan on a full-day eight-hour workshop.

Preparing for Your Class

After you've decided whether to deliver a knowledge-based class or a skill-based class, review the Manager's Workbook, the learning objectives and time estimates table. Use the Class Prep Worksheet as you go through the Manager's Workbook and consider how to best facilitate the class.

For example, which activities and assessments should managers complete on their own? Which are conducive to small group discussions or to be read and answered aloud in a large group? The number of participants you expect, their experience level, company/department/team morale and time constraints are some of the factors that will impact your workshop. Give thought to these factors as you work through the Class Prep Worksheet.

Note: *This is a straightforward process that will help you prepare for your class.*

Learning Objectives

When you have successfully completed this program, you will be able to:

- ➔ Identify common reasons for poor performance.
- ➔ Articulate the difference between attitudes and behaviors.
- ➔ Assess the prevailing attitudes you have about your current employees.
- ➔ Evaluate your own emotional hot buttons.
- ➔ Assess your employees' performance - good and poor - in behavioral terms.
- ➔ Define and put into practice the six-step painless performance improvement process.
- ➔ Recognize, and avoid, sidetracks during performance improvement discussions.
- ➔ Prepare for performance improvement discussions using the Six-Step Prep.

Time Constraints

If you have time constraints, consider the following:

- ➔ Give pre-class work. Look through the activities and assessments and consider whether any can be completed ahead of time (for example, the optional activity *Think of a Time* - this eliminates 10 minutes of class time). See the Sample Class Prep Worksheet on page 12.

- Use verbal Q & A instead of flip charting responses. Flip charting the responses offers employees a strong visual and adds variety to your meeting; however, limiting your discussion to a verbal Q & A may save you some time.
- Skip the optional summary activities (this eliminates 30 minutes of class time). These are a quick, energizing, fun, and highly effective way to reinforce the learning. However, if you are bound by time constraints, skip the summary activities and only use these energizing activities as a wrap-up if you have extra time.

Time Estimates

The Workshop Agenda and Time Estimates Table on the following page will give you time estimates for each section and activity. Keep in mind, however, that your time will vary depending on the number of participants, their training needs, and how you customize the program. The time estimates as listed include three 10-minute breaks.

Note: *Agenda items with an asterisk are skill-based activities, which will be discussed later in this guide.*

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Workshop Agenda and Time Estimates Table

(a) Workshop Agenda	Knowledge-based	Skill-based
	Time Estimate (minutes)	
Welcome and Learning Objectives	5	5
Ice-breaker	15	15
Optional Activity: Think of a Time	10	10
Whose Problem Is It? and The 3Cs	5	5
Activity: Evaluating the 3Cs	10	10
*Activity: Case Studies	15	30
Optional Chapter 1 Summary Activity	5	5
Painless Performance Improvement DVD/Video	20	20
<i>Break (total time up to break)</i>	10 (85)	10 (100)
Activity: True or False	15	15
DVD/Video Discussion Questions	10	10
Optional Chapter 2 Summary Activity	5	5
*Attitude Versus Behavior	10	20
*Step 1 - State What You've Observed	10	20
Optional Activity: Attitude Assessment	5	5
Handling Hearsay	5	5
*Activity: Case Studies, Part 2	10	20
Optional Chapter 3 Summary Activity	5	5
Step 2 - Wait for a Response	10	10
Sidetracks	10	10
Step 3 - Remind Them of the Goal	5	5
*Activity: The "Right Now" Redirect	10	20
<i>Break (total time between breaks)</i>	10 (110)	10 (150)
Step 4 - Ask Them for Their Specific Solution	5	5
The "So" Transition	5	5
Optional Activity: Problem Solved?	10	10
*Activity: Prompting for Solutions	5	10
*Activity: Case Studies, Part 3	10	20
Optional Chapter 4 Summary Activity	5	5
Step 5 - Agree Together	5	5
*Activity: Case Studies, Part 4	15	30
Optional Chapter 5 Summary Activity	5	5
*What If...	15	30
Optional Chapter 6 Summary Activity	5	5
<i>Break (total time between breaks)</i>	10 (85)	10 (130)
Putting It All Together	10	10
*Activity: The Six-Step Prep in Action	15	30
Painless Performance Improvement - The Basics	5	5
Summary Activity	10	10
Wrap-up (total time since last break)	10 (50)	15 (70)
Total Estimated Time	5 - 6 hours	8 hours

Pre-Class Checklist

To help you organize your thoughts and get ready for your workshop, we've included a Pre-class checklist.

- Reserve training space and equipment, if necessary.
- Order Manager's Workbooks (one per participant).
- Watch the DVD/video.
- Read the Manager's Workbook.
- Read this booklet.
- Decide whether your workshop will be knowledge-based or skill-based.
- Complete the Class Prep Worksheet.
- Customize the program by making notes in the margins of your Manager's Workbook.
- Send each manager a letter outlining the learning objectives and confirming the time and location of the workshop (write your own letter or use the Confirmation Letter we've provided in the Class Aids section of this booklet).
- Reproduce the Class Aids you're going to use.
- Create flip charts to reinforce the learning points of each section and review the PowerPoint slides.
- Get giveaways (candy, inexpensive trinkets, buttons, stickers, etc.) to reinforce the learning, energize the class and add another dimension of fun.
- Decide how you will follow up with managers to help ensure transfer of training.

Setting Up the Room

When you set up your room, think about how many participants will be attending. If possible, set up tables to encourage small group discussion and interaction. Position chairs so all participants can easily see the front of the room. A chevron (inverted v-shape) works well. Try to avoid the classroom or U-shape setup because neither is conducive to small-group formation and discussions.

Set up tables and chairs so participants in the back of the training room can easily see the DVD/video, flip charts, and PowerPoint slides (if you use them). If you have control over where the room is located (choice of meeting rooms in a hotel, for example) choose one that is free from disruptions. For example, if the group in the meeting room next to yours has a coffee and Danish break set up in the hallway, the noise and traffic may disrupt your workshop.

Customizing the Program

Activities

Many of the activities can easily be facilitated and debriefed in small groups. As you prepare to teach, familiarize yourself with the activities and assessments and decide ahead of time whether you want managers to work alone, in pairs or in groups. Some activities may also be facilitated verbally in the large group. And consider how you'd like to debrief. For example, you may want managers to work through an activity alone but debrief it in their small groups. See the Sample Class Prep Worksheet on page 11. Just make sure managers close their Workbooks when appropriate because answers are provided.

To help you get organized, we've included a Class Prep Worksheet. An additional Class Prep Worksheet is located in the Class Aids section of this booklet.

Class Prep Worksheet

To give you an idea of how the Class Prep Worksheet can help you prepare for your class, refer to the sample worksheet below and consider the following:

- Do you want to include this topic/activity as a component in your workshop?
- Do you want to assign this topic/activity as pre-class work?
- Do you want participants to complete the activity alone (A) or in small groups (SG)? Or do you want to conduct the activity aloud in a large group (LG)?
- Similarly, how do you want to debrief the topic/activity?
- Do you want managers to practice this topic/activity?
- Based on class size, experience, and training needs, how much time do you estimate for this topic/activity?

Sample Class Prep Worksheet

Content - Topics and Activities	Workshop Component	Pre-class Work?	Alone, Small or Large Group?	Skills Practice?	Time Estimate
Welcome and Learning Objectives	X				5
Icebreaker	X		A / LG		15
Optional Activity: Think of a Time		Y	A / SG		5
Whose Problem Is It? and The 3Cs	X				5
Activity: Evaluating the 3Cs	X				10
Activity: Case Studies	X	Y	SG		15
Optional Chapter 1 Summary Activity	X		LG		5
Painless Performance DVD/Video	X				20
Activity: True or False	X		A / SG		15
DVD/Video Discussion Questions	X		A / LG		10
Optional Chapter 2 Summary Activity	X		SG / SG		5
Attitude Versus Behavior	X		SG / SG	Y	20
Step 1 - State What You've Observed	X		SG	Y	20
Optional Activity: Attitude Assessment					
Handling Hearsay	X				5
Activity: Case Studies, Part 2	X		SG	Y	20
Optional Chapter 3 Summary Activity	X		SG		5

Note: We recognize that training requires adaptability. Learning, experience, company issues and time constraints may necessitate you to change your plan during the course of the workshop. You may plan for a small group activity but during the workshop you may decide to debrief in a large group instead. The Class Prep Worksheet is only a guide to help you prepare for your workshop.

Skill-Based Activities

This program is designed for skills practice. Refer to the Workshop Agenda and Time Estimates Table and note which activities (noted with an *) can easily be expanded to include practice. Then refer to the Manager's Workbook to customize the activities for skill building. Think of ways managers can practice the Six-Step Process and model the correct behaviors. If because of time constraints you are limited in the time you can provide for skills practice, then focus only on the Six-Step Prep in Action activity (discussed in the next section). It gives managers a chance to plan and practice a painless performance improvement discussion. Facilitate the rest of the workshop as a knowledge-based class, and then give your managers time with this activity to model the skills they've learned throughout the workshop.

Customizing the Activities for a Skill-based Class

We've highlighted the activities below and provided ideas on how to customize them for a skill-based workshop. These are only suggestions: feel free to facilitate or debrief other ways as well, as long as managers have an opportunity to try what they are learning and discuss it afterward.

Note: *Case studies and summary activities are discussed at the end of this section.*

Activity: Definitions - Attitudes Versus Behaviors

Understanding the difference between an attitude and a behavior makes it easier to focus on performance. Consider using skits to illustrate the distinction. Use the two scenarios provided or develop your own.

Activity: Step 1 - State What You've Observed

In small groups, have participants demonstrate what they would say for each scenario. (Or develop your own company-specific scenarios.) Set up the activity so that each participant has a chance to be the manager in the scenario. Walk around to offer redirects or suggestions as needed. Then verbally debrief by asking managers how it went and what challenges they encountered or observed.

Activity: The "Right Now" Redirect

Ask for two volunteers to perform a skit based on the scenario we've provided in their Workbook. (Or develop your own company-specific scenarios.) Then verbally debrief. How well did the redirect work? How did the employee feel as the manager used the "right now" redirect?

Activity: Prompting for Solutions

To inject some extra fun and enhance the learning, consider setting up skills practice for this activity by developing your own scenarios. (Or make sure participants close their workbooks so they don't see the scenarios we've provided.) Then, ask for two volunteers for each scenario but ask the volunteer who plays the employee to step out of the room for a moment. Explain the possible solution to the rest of the group and ask participants to take a moment to jot down questions they would ask.

Tell them to put a checkmark next to any of their questions that the manager asks during the scenario. Ask the volunteer to return and let the scenario unfold. Debrief by asking the group if anyone had a unique question the manager didn't use. Ask the "employee" and the manager about how they think it went.

Note: *When the employee comes up with a solution different from what the manager wants, the manager should say something like, "Good idea. What else might work?"*

Activity: What If...

Although the Manager's Workbook does not include an activity on follow through, a skill-based workshop should. It's an important part of the process that should be practiced. Consider using the case studies or creating your own company specific scenarios (or ones you've developed for other activities). Set up scenarios that allows participants to practice following up with an employee who:

- Has improved fully and achieved the performance standard
- Has made progress but hasn't yet fully achieved the performance standard
- Has failed to improve and needs to be terminated

Activity: The Six-Step Prep in Action

This is probably the most critical activity in a skill-based workshop if you want to help ensure your managers can put together everything they've learned and practice it. It provides managers an opportunity to prepare for and model a performance improvement discussion (ideally, managers should work on an actual performance issue).

Set up this skills practice activity so that your managers can use the Six-Step Prep Worksheet and the 3Cs Checklist in the Manager's Workbook to prepare. Then, in triads, managers will have an opportunity to practice the Six-Step Process and critique one another.

Note: We encourage you to develop realistic, company-specific scenarios ahead of time and put them in a container. Managers who don't have a problem to work on or who would rather work on a generic issue can draw a slip of paper from your container and have a problem to use for this activity. It's also important to maintain confidentiality with regard to team members and performance issues. Consider creating a ground rule in which everyone agrees to keep confidential anything that is said during class. Also, respect a manager's desire to speak in general terms or to choose a generic issue to practice.

Case Studies

These also offer an opportunity to break down the Six-Step Process and practice it. If you'd like your managers to practice the painless performance improvement process, consider the following:

Role-play in triads. Divide managers into groups of three so they can take turns being the manager, employee and observer. After they act out the case study, the observer can critique according to the debriefs outlined in the Manager's Workbook following each Case Study activity.

Note: If you choose this approach, groups should discuss the case studies and answer the questions during the first case study activity. They should role-play when the steps are introduced in Case Studies, Part 2.

Role-play in front of the large group. If you have time constraints, this may be faster. Ask for volunteers to act out the case studies. The volunteers can decide how to approach the scenario and then act it out. Then facilitate a group critique according to the debriefs outlined in the Manager's Workbook following each Case Study activity. Consider whether you'd like the same three managers to act out each part of the case study for consistency, or whether you'd like to involve more managers in the role-play process.

Note: If you choose this approach, consider having volunteers role-play the first Case Study activity too, just to set up the scenarios. Then verbally debrief the activity.

Facilitating the Class

Training Tips

Before we get into details of the workshop itself, let's go through a few basic training tips:

- Start on time and end on time. Respect your managers and their time. Reward those who arrive promptly by beginning on time.
- *Take breaks at odd intervals.* Particularly handy when time is tight, tell managers to return in seven minutes or start your 10-minute break at 11:24. Managers will be more likely to return promptly because of the specifics of your request. It's more fun too!
- Keep the workshop interactive. Ask a lot of questions. Encourage discussion. Ask for opinions.
- Anticipate objections and challenges. Think about the knowledge and experience of your team. Try to anticipate any reluctant learners and address their concerns at the start of the meeting. Explain why you think this training will benefit them and the company. Respect what they have to offer and encourage their participation.
- *Ask questions and wait for an answer.* Silence is your friend! Repeat the question if you need to, but try not to answer it for them. Someone will speak up and offer an answer.
- *Encourage participation.* Handle answers and participation with encouragement and courtesy. Repeat the answer if it's right and acknowledge that it's correct. If it's not accurate, say something like "Not quite" or offer a gentle "No" and then add "Any other ideas?"
- Follow up. Your training meeting is only a start. Check on how everyone is feeling. Tell your managers during the workshop that you will follow up. Then, do so!

Icebreakers

The purpose of an icebreaker is to:

- Set the stage for a fun workshop.
- Give managers an opportunity to ease into the learning environment.
- Give managers who don't know one another an opportunity to get acquainted.

- Give you an opportunity to start discussion about the topic in a creative manner.
- Give latecomers a chance to arrive without missing any specific content.

Spend the first part of your workshop facilitating an icebreaker. Use one of the icebreakers we've provided in the Class Aids section of this booklet, or use your own. Both icebreakers we've included allow you to easily transition easily to content.

The IX Exercise illustrates how often our own biases and perceptions can impede problem solving. The Performance Improvement Discussion - How Do I Dread Thee? icebreaker offers a tongue-in-cheek look at how we feel about performance improvement discussions. Both set up the program in a fun way.

Learning Objectives

Even though you've sent a confirmation letter outlining the objectives of the workshop, it's important to set up the learning. Refer managers to **page 1** in the Manager's Workbook and give them a moment to read through the learning objectives.

The DVD/Video

The DVD/video is the cornerstone of this training program. It is highly entertaining and funny and it details the six steps to painless performance improvement.

The Six-Step Process

This program breaks down the painless performance improvement process so that managers can learn about each step. Your facilitation of the content, discussion and activities will help managers put the process together.

Case Studies

The case studies offer managers an important opportunity to analyze and discuss each scenario and the manager's approach. As you discuss different steps of the painless performance improvement process, use the case studies to enhance the learning. Whether you are teaching a knowledge-based or skill-based class, the case studies provide an opportunity for managers to analyze what's happening and the outcomes.

Summary Activities

Each chapter has a summary activity. With a little imagination, you can turn them into high-energy group summaries. Be creative.

Here's one idea that will quickly energize your group while helping them remember the six steps:

Break your class into five groups and assign Steps 2 through 6 to each group at the beginning of the workshop.

As you complete each chapter and it's time for the summary, have the other four groups brainstorm and flip chart all the learning points they can remember. Meanwhile, the group that has the assigned step should be working on an exaggerated memory visual to share with the class (the more outrageous, the better). Ask the group that is creating the memory visual to select a spokesperson.

Select a corner or a wall in the room and ask everyone to look there.

Direct the spokesperson to point to the wall and say something like, "Picture..." or "Imagine..."

Note: *You will illustrate how this energizing summary activity works by creating the memory visual for Step 1. Create your own or use the suggestion we've provided here.*

Memory Visual Ideas - Step 1: State What You've Observed

Select a corner or a wall in the room and ask everyone to look there. Explain that for each step, they will create a memory visual to help everyone remember the six-step process.

Point to the wall and say:

"Imagine a large newspaper. It takes up the whole wall.

The front page headline is so big it screams off the page."

Its reads: "State What You've Observed."

Note: *After each summary activity (or when the energy level needs to increase) you'll direct everyone's attention to the wall and ask them what they see. Ask the group to yell out the visual for the step and the step itself.*

Follow-up

Once your managers walk out of your training room, your job is not finished. Follow-up is critical. How do you know whether they will remember what they've learned or whether they've transferred the learning to their workplace?

When you sent your managers a confirmation letter that outlined the learning objectives, you prepared them to learn. When they attended your workshop, you created an environment in which they could learn and practice new skills.

Now it's time to determine what they are doing with their newly acquired knowledge or skills. How you will follow up will depend on your time, resources, demands and company culture. Here are some ideas.

- *Distribute Dear Manager letters* (located in the Class Aids section of this booklet) or funny postcards. Tell managers to address the letter or postcard to themselves and then write down three or four things they'd like to remember from the workshop. Collect the letters or postcards and tell managers you will mail them to them in 30 days. Then don't forget to mail them!
- *Schedule an informal follow-up session* to talk about how things are going.
- *Have managers select a partner during class to follow up with*, and contact one of them at random to find out how things are going.
- *Create a contest with the Six-Step Memory Game Reminder* (located in the Class Aids section of this booklet). Tell managers that participation and accuracy means prizes. Then reward them for their efforts with an inexpensive trinket, inclusion in the Six-Step Club, etc. Be creative. **Note:** *If you will be teaching this class more than once, make sure you note the visuals your class creates so you have an answer key.*

Class Aids

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Painless Performance Improvement Workshop Confirmation Letter

Congratulations! You have been selected to attend our leadership workshop, *Painless Performance Improvement*.

With your head already spinning with the many pressures of your job, do you really need yet another task that demands your time and attention? You're probably already mentally shaking your head "no". But this is not just another task. This is an opportunity to make your job easier and less stressful.

So what's in it for you? Why should you give this program your full attention and effort? A collaborative approach to performance improvement offers you the potential for:

Less stress - The painless performance improvement process reduces common conflicts associated with performance problems

Higher employee morale - You're sending the message that you want your employees to succeed and that what they do matters

Increased communication and trust between you and your employees - Using this collaborative performance improvement process will show your employees your actions as a leader match your words.

Lower turnover - Saving even one employee from unnecessary termination saves you time and money.

The Painless Performance Improvement Process is not theory. It is a practical process that works in the real world. When you have successfully completed this program, you will be able to:

- Identify common reasons for poor performance.
- Articulate the difference between attitudes and behaviors.
- Assess the prevailing attitudes you have about your current employees.
- Evaluate your own emotional hot buttons.
- Assess your employees' performance - good and poor - in behavioral terms.
- Define and put into practice the six-step Painless Performance Improvement Process.
- Recognize, and avoid, sidetracks during performance improvement discussions.
- Prepare for performance improvement discussions using the Six-Step Prep.

The workshop details are:

Date and time:

Location:

Class Prep Worksheet

Content - Topics and Activities	Workshop Component	Pre-class Work?	Alone, Small or Large Group?	Skills Practice?	Time Estimate
Welcome and Learning Objectives					
Ice-breaker					
Optional Activity: Think of a Time					
Whose Problem Is It? and the 3Cs					
Activity: Evaluating the 3Cs					
Activity: Case Studies					
Optional Chapter 1 Summary Activity					
Painless Performance DVD/Video					
Activity: True or False					
DVD/Video Discussion Questions					
Optional Chapter 2 Summary Activity					
Attitude Versus Behavior					
Step 1 - State What You've Observed					
Optional Activity: Attitude Assessment					
Handling Hearsay					
Activity: Case Studies, Part 2					
Optional Chapter 3 Summary Activity					
Step 2 - Wait for a Response					
Sidetracks					
Step 3 - Remind Them of the Goal					
Activity: The "Right Now" Redirect					
Step 4 - Ask Them for Their Specific Solution					
The "So" Transition					
Optional Activity: Problem Solved?					
Activity: Prompting for Solutions					
Activity: Case Studies, Part 3					
Optional Chapter 4 Summary Activity					
Step 5 - Agree Together					
Activity: Case Studies, Part 4					
Optional Chapter 5 Summary Activity					
What If...					
Optional Chapter 6 Summary Activity					
Putting It All Together					
Activity: The Six-Step Prep in Action					
Performance Improvement -The Basics					
Summary Activity					
Wrap-up					
Total Estimated Time					

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Icebreakers

The IX Exercise

Materials: One handout per manager (reproduce the next page or create your own handout)

Objective: This is a quick exercise that illustrates how preconceived notions often interfere with problem solving.

Directions: Tell participants to make a 6 out of the symbol "IX" using only one line. Give them only a moment or two.

The correct answer is SIX. Most people will see "IX" as the Roman numeral nine.

Debrief: Flip-chart the answer.

Ask for a show of hands for how many figured out that they needed to write the letter S. Ask what assumptions or preconceived notions got in the way for everyone else (Roman numeral nine, etc.)

Ask what this icebreaker activity has to do with performance improvement discussions. Talk about the assumptions we sometimes make about our employees (they are lazy or don't care, etc).

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Performance Improvement Discussions - How Do I Dread Thee?

Take a few minutes to assess your uneasiness with performance improvement discussions.

When I get ready to meet with someone to talk about a performance problem, I:

- a. Break out in a cold sweat.
- b. Try to think of a reason to reschedule until tomorrow.
- c. Feel giddy with anticipation.

Instead of having a performance improvement discussion this afternoon with one of my employees, I would rather:

- a. Have a root canal.
- b. Take the day off.
- c. Move it up to this morning.

It's been a month since I last had to deal with a performance problem on my team and I am:

- a. Dreading the next problem.
- b. Hoping nothing comes up but will address it if it does.
- c. Anxiously awaiting the next time that one of my employees messes up.

Working with employees to improve their performance is the:

- a. Worst part of my job.
- b. Is an important part of my job.
- c. Best part of my job.

The statement that best describes how I feel about performance improvement is:

- a. "Do I have to?"
- b. "I don't like it but I know it's important so I'll do it."
- c. "I can't believe they pay me to do this!"

Icebreaker Activity Debrief

Count the number of a, b, and c responses you have and record them below.

Number of responses: a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

If the majority of your responses are:

- a. You believe performance improvement discussions are wrought with conflict. In case it makes you feel any better, you're not alone! The good news is that after you finish this training, we're confident you won't look forward to letting a dentist grind through one of your molars just to avoid a performance improvement discussion.
- b. You may look for reasons to legitimately postpone a performance improvement discussion, but you understand its importance. The good news is that when you finish this training, you'll feel much more comfortable and confident when you meet with an employee to discuss poor performance.
- c. We're a little worried about you. Either you need a vacation or you need to go back and complete the activity again. We're guessing you were a bit optimistic with your responses.

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Dear _____ (insert your name here)

I'd like to remember the following from the Painless Performance Improvement workshop I attended.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Keep up the good work!

Signature _____

Date: _____

Painless Performance Improvement Six-Step Memory Game Reminder

This is a contest for all managers who attended the Painless Performance Improvement workshop on _____ (date). Prizes will be awarded to all managers whose correct entries I receive by _____ (date) and an extra prize will go to the manager who sends in the first correct entry I receive. Complete the memory visuals for each step of the Painless Performance Improvement Process and the step it represents.

Step 1 visual:

A gigantic newspaper. The front-page headline is so big it screams off the page. It reads: "State What You've Observed."

Step 1: State What You've Observed

Step 2 visual:

Step 2:

Step 3 visual:

Step 3:

Step 4 visual:

Step 4:

Step 5 visual:

Step 5:

Step 6 visual:

Step 6:

PREVIEW

Reference Guide

Practical Answers to Real World Questions

1. He's Hanging Out With Friends...

One of my employees told me that another one of my night-shift employees regularly has friends visit and hang out at the front counter with him. Since I've never seen it happen, what should I do?

Stop by, unannounced, during the night shift and see for yourself.

Show your night-shift employees that you think they are important. Maybe you'll even catch them doing something right! As for the employee in question, stop in and observe the inappropriate behavior, which will make it easier to address.

What if I don't actually see friends hanging out with the employee? What if I don't see any problem?

That's when it gets tricky, because you are dealing with hearsay. Instead of stating what you've observed, state what someone told you and give your employee the opportunity to tell his side. But it's important to plainly state what you were told. Keep your emotions out of it and do not judge. At that point, it really depends on what your employee says. If he admits his friends come and hang out, then remind him of the performance goal and move into problem solving. If he sidetracks you, use the "right now" redirect and continue. If he denies the behavior, give him the benefit of the doubt and plainly state the performance goal. Consider saying something like, "Okay. I don't know if it's true or not and it doesn't matter. Since this was said though, I need to make sure you understand that socializing and having friends visit during work hours is not acceptable."

2. I Feel Bad for the Guy...

He has worked for me for the last two years. He's not a star performer by any means, but he is solid: meets the time and quota standards, always on time, helps out wherever he's needed. Just recently, though, he started missing his quota. His work is slower and I've had to send a few pieces back because of quality problems. I feel bad for the guy. His wife just left him and I keep waiting for him to get back on track. I don't want to add to his problems, so I haven't said anything, but it's been two weeks. What should I do?

Say something.

It's tough to address a performance issue when your employee has always been a solid asset to the group. But it's time. Your other employees are watching you and you have a business

to run. If you continue to look the other way, the problem may get worse, his missed quotas may start to affect the entire group, and quality may become an issue.

Keep your emotions out of it and state what you've observed. Anticipate that he may sidetrack you by talking about his personal problems. Listen and validate him by saying something like, "I know you are going through a difficult time with your wife. But right now, we're talking about our quota and quality standards. The company expects us to ...

3. She Needs to Lighten Up...

She's one of those people who just rubs people the wrong way - me included. I finally told her that she needed to lighten up a bit with customers and staff if she wants to be successful here. Our meeting didn't go well. What should I do now?

Just avoid her for a couple of days and the whole thing will blow over.

Ahh, if only that were true. But it isn't. Avoiding her will likely only make things worse, especially if emotions flared during the meeting. Instead, start at the beginning. Let go of your attitudes and emotions about her and focus on performance.

Ask yourself what you mean by "lighten up" and think about her interactions with customers and staff. What does she do? Does she argue? Does she stand too close? Does she talk loud? Does she interrupt? Is her eye contact too intense? Think about *why* she rubs you the wrong way. Be honest with yourself. Do you have preconceived ideas about her? Have you already mentally written her off? Use the Six-Step Prep and when you're ready to let go of your attitudes and emotions, meet with her again.

Start with an apology and move into the Painless Performance Improvement Process. Say something like, "I'm sorry our previous meeting didn't go well. I want you to be successful here, and I realize I need to be more specific with you about your performance. I noticed that when you talk with customers, sometimes you argue with them about... "

4. Excuses, excuses, excuses...

When I try to talk with my employee about meeting her deadlines, she gives me a laundry list of reasons why she missed the deadline: her co-workers didn't give her the information on time. She missed a day last week because she was sick. The system was down. The vendors changed their pricing at the last minute. What can I do to get her to understand the deadlines are her responsibility?

Tell her.

Excuses are a classic sidetrack, which diverts your attention to something or someone else. Plan to meet with your employee using the Painless Performance Improvement Process. And when she starts to give you excuses, use the “right now” redirect to get back on track.

5. He Needs an Attitude Adjustment...

After watching a couple of upset customers walk out, I met with my newest employee to learn what happened. He said he could sell three customers in the time it takes one old lady to figure out what he’s talking about. How can I help him change his attitude?

You can’t. But you can help him change his behavior.

It’s a personal choice to change an attitude whether it’s our current mood or a long-held bias. We alone can choose to change it. Sometimes our beliefs are so deep-seated (such as believing that elderly people are slow), it takes a life-changing event to make a change. But we *can* influence others to change their behaviors.

For starters, think about what your employee is doing to anger his older customers. Think about the specific behaviors you’ve seen. That’s your starting point for your performance improvement discussion.

He flatly told you that he wants nothing to do with older customers. When you remind him of the performance goal, speak in behavioral terms - greet with a smile, explain the product, answer questions, etc. And express your expectation that he will offer outstanding service to all customers, regardless of age.

6. The Attack...

I have an employee who talks on the phone a lot. When I spoke to her about it, she said, “You talk to your wife on the phone. I talk to my husband and a couple of friends once in a while but I get all my work done. What’s the problem?” What she says is true, so where do I go from here?

Decide whether it’s really a problem.

If your company tracks personal phone usage and has standards that she exceeds, then it’s a problem. State what you’ve observed and use the reports if you have any. “I noticed your personal phone calls are quite a bit over the company’s limit.” When she attacks you, counter the sidetrack with the “right now” redirect and explain the company’s expectation. Then move into problem solving.

If your company doesn't track phone usage, but the amount of personal time she spends on the phone bothers you, think about why. Assess your expectations and consider her work. Does she have enough to do? If you see this as a problem, is it important enough to lead to termination? If yes, go through the Painless Performance Improvement Process. And, make sure your personal phone time is at an acceptable level. The "do as I say, not as I do" adage does not work well here.

7. The Self-Inflicted Wound...

Before I could even get a word out about his unacceptable uniform, he said, "What did I do wrong this time?" I was so taken aback, I just said, "I was wondering why your uniform is so wrinkled." He apologized and said that he would add it to his list of things to work on. He was so dejected. What did I do wrong?

Nothing.

You were pushed off track by the Self-Inflicted Wound sidetrack. It's never any fun to be confronted about our performance or work habits. Most employees react in a way that diverts our attention away from the issue. And unless you're prepared, sidetracks can essentially end a performance improvement discussion. But they don't have to.

When your employee says, "I'll add it to my list of things to work on," try saying something like, "Okay. Good. But right now, we need to talk about the company's uniform expectations. So, what do you plan to do differently tomorrow to make sure you arrive at work in a clean, wrinkle-free uniform?"

8. How Many Chances Should I Give Her?...

I was angry when I overheard one of my employees spreading rumors. I knew she was a gossip before I hired her, but I thought she would be a good employee. And except for this, she is. How many chances should I give her?

Chances? It sounds like you've given up on her already.

Before you give up on her, perhaps you have emotions and preconceived attitudes you need to address. Is this the first time you have heard her (directly) spreading rumors? What about the situation makes you angry? Why do you call what she said a rumor? Did you hear her make malicious remarks? Is what she said of a personal nature or work-related? Are her remarks about someone you admire and respect? You call her a gossip. What makes you

think so? Use the Six-Step Prep and when you're ready to let go of your attitudes and emotions, meet with her.

Begin by stating what you observed. Say something like, "I noticed you talking in the break room and I heard you say, ..." As you go through the six-step Painless Performance Improvement Process, focus on the company's standards. For example, plainly state the expectations for a respectful work environment and the company's zero-tolerance policy for malice or harassment, etc.

9. An Idle Threat?...

I told him he would be fired if he came in late again. I thought that would turn him around, but he was late again this morning. I really don't want to let him go. Now what do I do?

Oh, that's a tough one.

Will you be ready to fire him if he continues to be habitually late?

If the answer is yes, then you should handle it as a performance problem and try to help him change his behavior. Say something like, "I've thought a lot about firing you if you came in late again today. I decided you are too valuable an employee to let go without an opportunity to improve." Then take him through the Painless Performance Improvement Process. If he continues to be late, document it and terminate.

If the answer is no, then the problem isn't really as important as you first thought. And you should tell him you made a purposeful decision not to fire him. However, it is critical that you outline your expectations. For example, say something like, "I've thought a lot about firing you if you came in late again today. I decided you are too valuable an employee to worry about whether you're here by 8:30 or a few minutes late. But I expect you to be in and on the phone by 8:45 or it will become a performance problem." And if you choose to go down this path, recognize that probably all your employees will be less punctual.

And the next time you feel your emotions start to take hold, take a break and look at the Six-Step Prep. It may help prevent you from making threats.

10. When Good Employees Go Astray...

I have a stellar employee who is going through a difficult time. She's missed a few deadlines, which caused problems with the rest of the staff. She assured me it wouldn't happen again, but it did. How understanding should I be?

Understanding is fine. Inconsistent is not.

Sometimes it's difficult to separate the lives of our employees from their performance. You've tried talking with your employee and yet her personal problems are beginning to impact her work and the rest of the staff.

It's time to seriously address her missed deadlines. The Painless Performance Improvement Process focuses on the performance goal and the collaboration between you and your employee will give her every opportunity to succeed. It's up to her to change. It doesn't matter that she has been a stellar employee. Right now, she is not meeting the requirements of her job. If another employee's performance were poor, wouldn't you address it?

11. Actions Speak Louder Than Words...

I often stay late, so I don't pay too much attention to when I come in or how long my lunch hour is. Now it seems that everyone thinks it's OK to stretch their breaks or come in a few minutes late. But it isn't. What should I do?

Change your ways or accept the new standard.

That's probably not what you wanted to hear. The truth is that leaders set the standard by what they say and what they do. First, you need to decide if this is an important enough issue to address. Does it really matter? Or does it bother you because you're the boss and you think you should have some privileges?

If you have a work environment that allows for a lot of freedom with regard to the clock, the decision on how to handle this issue is truly yours. If your work environment is more structured, you may need to change your ways and lead by example.

The bottom line is that you have a couple of options. You can meet with your team and explain that everyone - including you - has become lax with regard to promptness. You can set the new standard and ask that everyone commit to being punctual again. If you decide on this approach, consider the consequences for failure to change behaviors.

Or you can speak to their sense of fairness and say that you always stay late, which is why you don't pay attention to when you come in or how long your lunch is. You can offer them

the same arrangement, but explain that if they leave promptly when the workday is finished, you expect the same kind of promptness with regard to morning and lunch.

Or you can just let it go.

12. He Just Doesn't Listen...

I have spoken with one of my employees about his receiving errors. I've talked and talked and talked. He just doesn't listen. What should I do next?

Talk until you are blue in the face.

Actually, it sounds like you already did - and that may be part of the problem. It sounds as though your employee hasn't agreed on a solution or maybe even on whether a problem exists.

So, give it one more try. But, this time talk less. Listen more. And, most important, agree on a solution together. It's important to work together. If you're the only one talking, listening and working to solve the problem, you really don't know what your employee thinks about it, do you?

13. She's Just Lazy...

I have an employee who is just plain lazy. She doesn't care. So why should I?

Because you're her manager. That's why.

You owe it to your employees to give them every opportunity to succeed. In part, that means working with them to try to improve their performance.

So before you write off this employee, talk with her about her poor performance. But first, you need to focus on her behaviors. Saying someone is lazy is not a description of performance. It's how you feel about her. It's your attitude getting in the way. What makes you think she is lazy? Does she wait until you tell her what to do instead of taking initiative? Does she rush from one task to the next? Is she often late?

Using the Painless Performance Improvement Process, specifically state what she is doing that is unacceptable. For example, "Unless I give you something specific to do, I've noticed

that you stand behind the counter and do nothing until the next customer walks in. This is a problem because then we get behind on our closing duties.”

14. Failure to Improve...

But what about the employee who just doesn't improve?

Get rid of him.

Really. While it's true that termination should be your last resort (for a performance issue), it's still the consequence for failure to meet job expectations.

If your employee has no desire to improve or is unable to improve, it's time to let him go. Keeping an employee who isn't pulling his weight may cause other performance issues on the team, lower morale and undermine your efforts as a manager.

But the best part of terminating an employee with whom you have worked to try to improve performance is that you know your employee won't be surprised. And your Human Resources department will be happy that you followed a process to help ensure that the termination is without reproach.

15. But He's a Friend...

What do I do when the employee I need to talk to about poor performance is a good friend?

Good question.

This is a tough one. Co-workers who establish a friendship outside of work may have difficulty when one of them is promoted. The situation becomes even trickier if a performance problem arises. The friendship can blur the lines of manager-employee relations, and it may be challenging to remain objective and keep emotions out of the situation.

But that's exactly what you need to do. It's likely that you will have an opportunity to address your friendship during the Painless Performance Improvement Process. Your employee may even use your friendship to sidetrack you. If that happens, address it directly and use the "right now" redirect. For example, say something like, "I know we are good friends. But this has nothing to do with our friendship. Right now, we're talking about ..."

16. My Attitudes...

How do I know if my attitudes are getting in the way?

If you feel like your employee is a lost cause, they're getting in the way.

We all have personal biases and attitudes that enable us to create split-second judgments about our experiences and surroundings. Right or wrong, attitudes filter the world for us. Given a voice, attitudes can be dangerous because they often stem from stereotypes, our personal value system and our own unique perception of the world. The good news is that attitudes can (and should) be left unsaid at work. Instead, put your attitudes into behavioral terms. Behaviors are specific and observable. For example, think about why you feel your employee is a lost cause. What is she doing? What is she not doing? What did you see?

And don't focus on your employees' attitudes either. You can't change these, but you can help them change their behaviors.

17. Theory versus. Practice...

Painless performance improvement? Sounds good. But does it really work?

At least in theory...

Just kidding. Of course it works! Many managers rely on this behavior-based performance improvement process. When you and your employee work together to solve a performance problem and you focus on behaviors, the process really works. Before long, the six steps won't feel like a process anymore; instead, they will become part of your management style.

18. Too Touchy-Feely?...

I'm their boss. Not a counselor. Why do I have to collaborate with my employees about their performance?

Attila the Hun was a boss too, but you don't need to model yourself after him, do you?

OK, maybe that's a bit extreme. But working with your employee to improve performance doesn't mean you're a soft-hearted manager who is incapable of making tough decisions. On the contrary, it shows that you are a strong manager - one who cares about his employees as well as the bottom line because they are inextricably intertwined.

Sure, it would be nice to show up for work, deal with your own stuff and trust that your employees will handle everything as you would. But let's face it, that's not reality. Your employees need you to encourage them, motivate them and sometimes redirect them. They need you to connect with them on a human level. Part of that connection is working with them to help them succeed. If they are successful, so are you.

19. Why Should I?...

What's in it for me?

Better performing employees.

And improved communication and trust, increased employee morale, and less pain for you! We'd like to tell you that you'd have more time in the day, fewer work problems and perfect employees. But that's not the real world. What we can tell you is that the time you spend will be more positive and productive.

Performance problems that go unheeded can grow and ultimately create heavy time burdens. The time you spend working with your employees to improve their performance with this six-step process will save you pain and effort in the long run.

20. How Does This Process Fit In?...

My company has a progressive discipline policy. How does this performance improvement process fit in?

Like a hammer and a nail. Or peanut butter and jelly. They work together.

Although every company's discipline policies differ, the basics are the same. Some gross violations (such as stealing) result in immediate termination. Others require documentation leading to termination for repeated offenses.

With regard to performance issues, most progressive discipline policies provide employees two to three documented meetings. This six-step Painless Performance Improvement Process provides the framework for those sessions. If performance doesn't improve after the first meeting, then you'll go through the process a second (or third) time, document it and clearly outline consequences, including termination.

Using your company's policy in conjunction with the Painless Performance Improvement Process is much more powerful, positive and encouraging than documentation alone.