

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO REAL PERFORMANCE

By Jean Strosinski, PCC

Second article of six in the series: *Coaching for Performance*

I concluded my last article with this question - ... do you wish to raise your standards and be the *Real Performance Coach*? If you said "YES!" you have expressed the first commitment to being one who coaches for *real performance* – for those actions that go beyond what is expected and meet one's own highest standard. Most of you in the performance improvement profession work you're your strengths and consistently focus to improve performance. The basic skills to be a coach for *real performance are used consistently*, and thus provide life-fulfilling value to an individual, to organizations and even to the individual.

So...we have two questions: 1) what barriers surround you and get in your way as you attempt to coach for *real performance*? 2) How do you begin to break down these barriers?

First, the barriers – what are they? Performance barriers for an individual in the workplace are found in two areas – business standards and the physical environment. Business standards support the nature of the business. They are the organization's philosophy (mission, vision and policy statements) and work practices (processes and procedures). The physical environment is the physical structure of the workplace, the personnel, and all other resources that support the business standards.

In answer to the second question – you begin to break down the barriers, by putting on your performance improvement hat and identifying the barriers for the individual or the organization. Look at the business standards and physical environment. Remember, assessment is not a one-time activity. To survive, a business must respond to change and the social, psychological and economic trends formulating change. Change is not static for any organization, or for individuals who serve as resources. To

excel, a business will continue to demand more of its resources and press to move to higher levels of expectations. Whether a business fails or succeeds, in fact, depends on the business practices and resources working in unison to meet the challenges of societal change. Some barriers found to stagnate *real performance* may include incomplete mission and vision statements, poorly structured work stations, undefined schedules and/or work taskings, poorly timed deliverables, and outdated processes and procedures.

Assessments performed in companies of excellence are conducted as an ongoing effort total staff involvement and honest evaluation directed to action. A recurring theme in John Whitworth's work (*Coaching for Performance*, 1996) is a focus on awareness and responsibility. He believes "There is a growing awareness in ordinary people leading them to demand to be more involved in the decisions that affect them, at work, at play, locally, nationally or even globally." This then leads to a development of a sense of responsibility, accountability plus a dimension of choice. It is building awareness and responsibility, which provides the essence for good coaching. (Whitworth, 1996). It is the business environment that supports the success of good coaching.

While any individual can develop a level of awareness relative to their own skills, the role of the coach is to support the individual in the discovery of their unique self-worth and value. The same is true for the organization struggling to discover its unique identity to establish its niche in today's world. To support the individual or the organization's desire to achieve *real performance*, you can take the following actions as their coach.

1. Be clear about who you are and what you are about – heighten your

- level of awareness and know your responsibilities.
2. Eliminate the barriers found in business standards and the physical environment.
  3. Encourage a shift from a place of blame to initiating choice.
  4. Support the movement through transition to honor the uniqueness for any individual or organization.
  5. Discover the opportunities and assist in the plan to move the individual and the organization from where they see themselves today to where they want to be one, two or five years down their path.

These actions are not difficult. Actually, the surge of energy that comes from the first

small movement will propel you and your clients to move faster and farther than you dreamed possible.

Coming up in the 3rd article of this series ... developing the specific skills needed to support coaching for real performance.

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