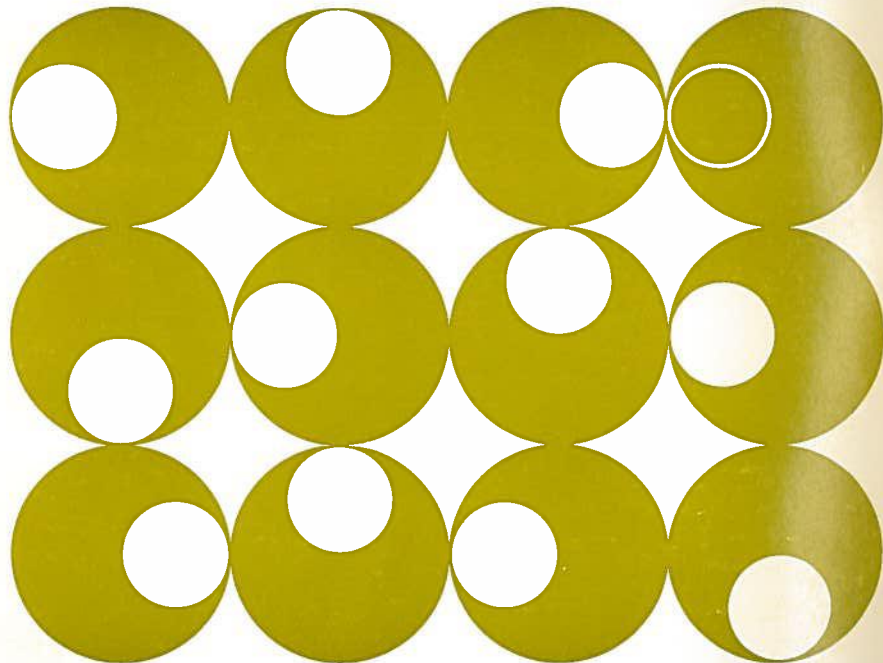


Some performance problems can be solved, especially those caused by our own lack of skill at applying principles of human behavior. This book is about those problems that arise because someone isn't doing what someone else expects him to be doing. It explains a procedure for analyzing such problems, and helps point you in the direction of those solutions that will work.

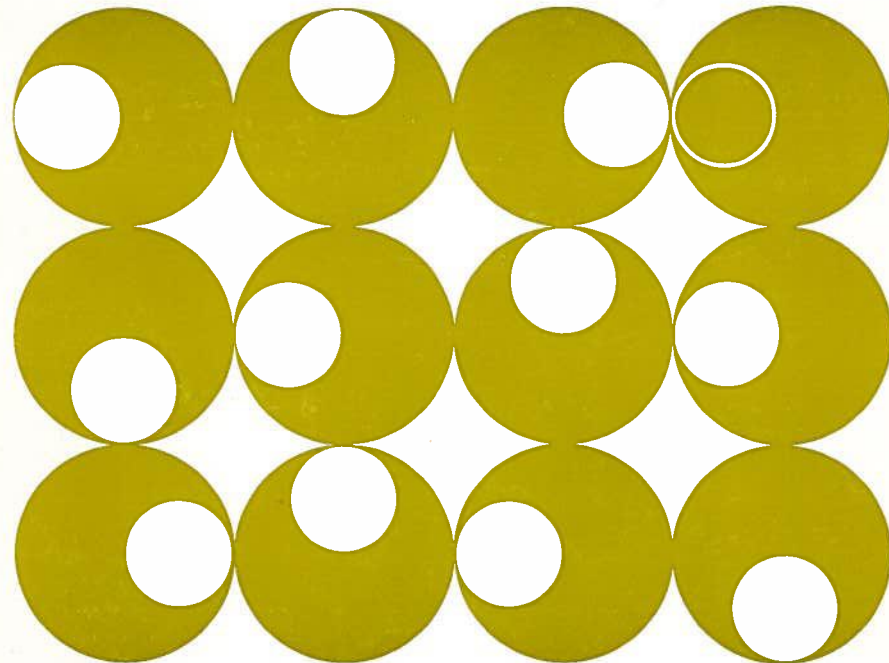
The book is based on the extensive experience of the authors. As part of their consulting activities they have conducted numerous performance analyses for business, industry, and education, and have taught others how to benefit from application of the analysis skill.



Analyzing Performance Problems

or

'You Really Oughta Wanna'



The problem of over-qualification can arise at home, too. Take the case of the teen-ager assigned to the carrying-out-the-garbage detail. The young are notoriously (and perhaps rightly) impatient of activities they consider boring. So the teen-ager fights carrying out the garbage. ("I'm his father/mother," you say. "Why should I get stuck with this chore when I have this great lummoX on hand? Isn't it boring for me, too?") Yes, of course. But, emotional issues aside, the teen-ager is bored and wants to be involved in something more exciting. Garbage-carrying loses out when it competes with doing, or even dreaming about, most other activities. The rewards of garbage-carrying have to be competitive with those real or imagined delights—a good trick. The least this tells you is that those who work at tasks for which they are over-qualified need some extrinsic reward to take the place of "satisfaction in the job." More on that later.)

In summary, it is useful to determine whether someone has the capacity to do the job required, and whether he would "fit" the job mentally and motivationally even if his performance were brought up to standard. If the answer to both questions is "yes," go ahead with your solution.

What to do

Determine whether the person has the potential to perform as desired.

How to do it

Ask these questions:

- Could he learn the job?
- Does he have the physical and mental potential to perform as desired?
- Is he over-qualified for the job?

PART III

It Is Not a Skill Deficiency.

He could do it if he wanted to.

Could he do it if he had to? This pivotal question was asked immediately after we determined that we were looking at an important performance discrepancy (Chapter 3). To this point, we've looked at several solutions that apply when the answer is plainly "No. Even if we held a gun at his head, he couldn't do it." Now we're going back to the question to see what happens when the answer is something other than that unequivocal "no."

When you know or suspect that a person could perform if he really had to, it's probably plain that something other than instruction is needed. In general, the remedy is that of *performance management*. Rather than modify the person's skill or knowledge (since it's likely that he already has the ability), you will have to modify the conditions associated with the performance, or the consequence or result of that performance. Rather than change what he *can* do, change something about the world in which he does it so that doing it will be more attractive, or less repulsive, or less difficult.

You will get clues that a problem is mainly one of performance management rather than performance teaching from statements such as:

- “He just isn’t motivated.”
- “He just doesn’t *want* to do it.”
- “He simply doesn’t *care*.”
- “He’s too lazy to do it.”
- “He doesn’t have the right attitude.”
- “He oughta wanna do it.”
- “I’m too busy to do it.”
- “I’m not allowed to do it.”
- “That isn’t my job.”
- “They’ll fire me if I do it.”
- “They’ll laugh at me if I do it.”
- “Not now, honey . . . later.”

These statements hint that the person probably *could* perform as desired, but isn’t. They suggest that the skill in question is already within the repertoire of the person being described, but that it is not being used. They are the clues that indicate a situation that might be described as “plenty of skill but not enough will.” You can be pretty sure that to influence him to do it you must change the environment around the performance in some way rather than try to add to his skills.

There are four general causes of such nonperformance:

1. It is punishing to perform as desired.
2. It is rewarding to perform other than as desired.
3. It simply doesn’t matter whether performance is as desired.
4. There are obstacles to performing as desired.

We will consider what each of these causes looks like in real life, and offer key questions for spotting them. We’ll also suggest remedies.

Once again, we emphasize that no sequence of priority or importance is implied by the order in which we have listed the causes or the position in which we have placed them in the flow diagram.

Consider them in any order you prefer. We urge only that you consider all of them before deciding that your analysis is complete. Usually, it will pay you to go over them more than once, since each answer you get may change your perception of the problem.

We now return to the point in our flow diagram where we determined whether the discrepancy in performance was due to a skill deficiency. This time we will look at the implications of “No. This is *not* a case of skill deficiency.”

CHAPTER 8

Is Desired Performance Punishing?

■ WHERE WE ARE

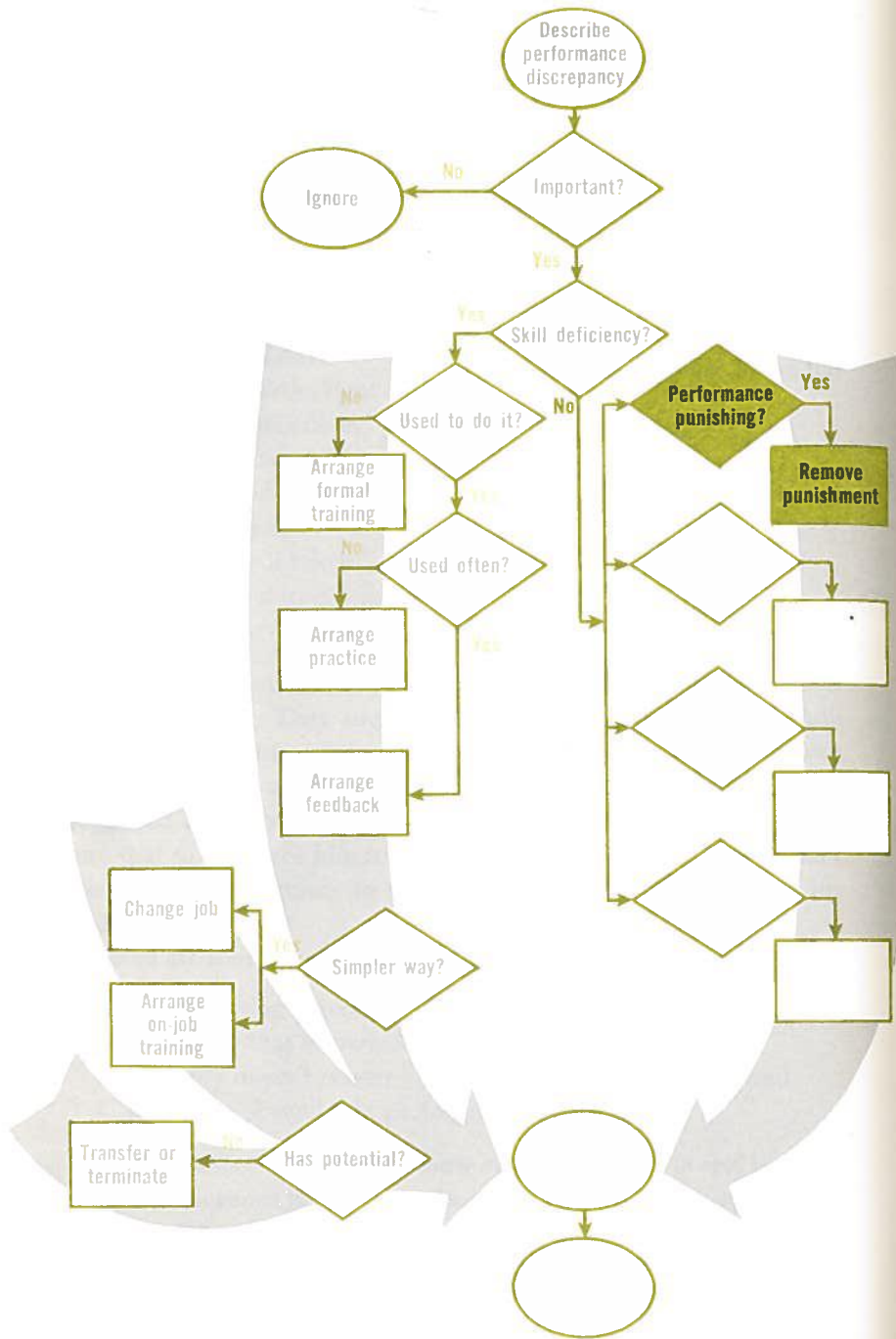
An important discrepancy is known or suspected not to be due to a skill deficiency. (That is, he could do it if he had to or if he wanted to.)

One reason people don't do as they are expected to do is simply that the desired "doing" is punishing. And when desired performance leads to undesirable results, people have a way of finding other ways to go. Here are several examples.

A college music student had the chance to play with his city's symphony orchestra. For a student who had not yet completed his training, this was a rare opportunity. Since he needed both the money and the experience, he asked his music teacher if something could be worked out.

"I think so," replied the teacher. "There is no reason why you shouldn't take the job, provided you make up the school work you miss on the days you are absent."

So, the student threw himself into both tasks. He did well with the symphony and earned "A's" and "B's" on all his make-up work. But



when grading time arrived, he found himself with a “C” for the course. Astonished, he asked his teacher why he was given only a “C” after receiving “A’s” and “B’s” for all his work.

She replied: “Well, you’re getting entirely too much experience and not enough learning.”

If you were the student, how would you feel in such a situation? No matter how you slice it, this is a situation in which desirable activity is followed by an unpleasant consequence (punishment). If, as a result of this dampening, the student were to perform his school work with less enthusiasm, one can imagine the teacher telling her colleagues, “You know, we’ve got to teach him to have the right attitude about his studies. He oughta wanna have more interest.”

Punishment for desired or superior performance is so common that one may overlook it in an area where it frequently occurs—the family. Yet it’s plain to see in neighborhoods where the norm is anti-intellectual. Sons or daughters who aspire to rise above the intellectual level of their relatives, or who set their sights on occupations different from those pursued by relatives, or who raise their conversations above the level of trivia, are clawed back into the quagmire of mediocrity. They are not applauded, or revered, or urged to greater heights, but instead are insulted and stung with ridicule so that they will not escape their mental ghettos.

There are many more cases around the home where desired performance is withheld because of its unfavorable consequence. Parents complain, “I don’t know what they teach ’em in school these days, but our kids don’t come to us with their questions and problems like they used to.” Observe these same parents in interaction with their children, however, and it quickly becomes apparent that the parents are the cause of the problem.

Kid: Hey, Mom’n Dad! Look what I made in school today!

Parent: Wipe your mouth!

or

Kid: Look at the picture I drew for you, Mom.

Mom: Don’t you ever clean your fingernails?

Little wonder the kids behave as they do. The parents, all unintentionally, perhaps, have engineered it that way. And usually they couldn’t have done a better job if they had been trying.

These examples are designed to remind you of a simple truth about human behavior:

People learn to avoid the things they are hit with!

It doesn’t matter whether they are hit with a club, an insult, humiliation, repeated failure, frustration, or boredom. If someone feels he will be punished, or even that there is a risk of being punished when he performs as you desire, he will avoid doing it your way whenever he can. People don’t often do things that will lead to their world being dimmer than it is.



And so, when someone isn’t performing as desired, and you know that he *could* do so, one thing to explore is whether it isn’t unnecessarily punishing to perform that way. Is there an undesirable consequence (result) for doing it your way? Does he see desired performance as being geared to penalties? If so, you have probably located a strong reason why you aren’t getting the results you would like.

We must emphasize, however, that it is not *your* view of the outcome that is important here. You must try to see the situation through the eyes of the person whose performance you would change and ask yourself, "What is the result to *him* for doing as I desire? How might *he* see the consequence of doing it?" What may be a favorable consequence to *you* may be *unfavorable* to *him*.

On occasion, this can be subtle. Sometimes it may strike you as ridiculous. No matter. Listen to what the performer says.

The employer says, "I don't see why he won't work overtime—he makes good money on it." But the employee says, "What's the good of overtime. Anything you earn, they take away in taxes."

The parent says, "I don't see why he won't take math. It will get him a better job when he's grown." But the student says, "Math is for the guys who want to follow the establishment road. I'm interested in people. Besides, the math teacher is the least liked guy in the whole school."

Or consider the case of the "rate buster" in school or industry—the one who turns out more work than anyone else. Is he revered by his colleagues for his skill or his industriousness? It's likely that he will soon perceive the group's attitude toward him as punishment for performance, and he'll slow down to the level of the group . . . or be pushed out of it.

Did you ever attend a school where the consequence of knowing your subject or of showing your intelligence was ridicule from other students, where the "in" thing was not to do homework and not to make good grades, where diligent students were dismissed as "egg-heads" and "brains" and worse?

You hear teachers and administrators complain that students don't do their homework. "These students oughta wanna do their homework. If they don't, they will be doomed to a lifetime of mediocrity." And then, because teachers and administrators fail to look at the problem from the students' viewpoint, they make new policies that only aggravate the situation.

In such a case, homework is doubly punishing for the student. He perceives it first as an onerous duty that replaces more pleasant ac-

tivities. If, despite this, he does the homework, it may lead to consequences in which the lumps he takes from his peers may outweigh more positive outcomes such as good grades and teacher approval. So he doesn't do his homework. So the school invents new punitive policies, and more threat of failure is laid on. And so the student perceives yet another reason why it's necessary to beat the system. One can't help thinking of two gladiators beating each other to death with bloodied clubs, each telling the other he oughta wanna be the first to stop. For no matter what the school does, it cannot invent a consequence aversive enough to outweigh the ridicule of peers.

A more effective way to break the miserable chain of events would be to make the consequence of studying more immediately favorable than those that now exist, so that those who study successfully will have reason to be envied rather than ridiculed. Rather than continue to argue that the student "oughta wanna" *for his own good*, make desired privileges dependent upon the performance wanted. Instead of saying, "You will fail if you don't learn," make the rule say that if the student learns he may have an extra free period, or that he will be allowed to come and go as he pleases, or that he will be entitled to some other thing he really finds desirable.

Several years ago the clinical faculty of a dental school complained that students were putting in too little laboratory time on dentures they were making for their patients. The situation was this. Students treated their patients in the clinic. When adjustments were needed in the fitting of dentures, the student would go to the laboratory to make adjustments and then return to the patient in the clinic to try again. The complaint of the faculty was that the students were not as painstaking as they should have been and as they *knew how to be* in getting dentures to fit. "We've got to teach them to be less careless," was the cry. "We've got to teach them to have the right attitude."

So here's another situation in which a person has the skill to perform as desired but for some reason is *not* performing as desired. But what would the faculty "teach" the students to remedy this performance discrepancy? What would they put in a curriculum—molar appreciation? How could they "encourage the right attitude"?

When the question was finally asked, "What is the consequence of performing correctly?" the nature of the problem became obvious. The laboratory was one floor up and at the other end of the building from the clinic. Obviously, it was less punishing to cut a few corners than to run up and down every few minutes. When the lab was finally moved next to the clinic, the quality of the dentures improved miraculously—without any instruction at all.

The hospital provides us with another example of how it is possible to design *against* the results one wants. Patients who cannot get out of bed are provided with a call button with which to summon help. Most of the time, the system works quite well. Occasionally, however, a patient will resist pressing the call button for long periods of time—even though in great distress.

Why doesn't the patient press the button when he is in need? What consequence of pressing the button when he needs help might cause him to suffer? Is it possible button-pushing can somehow be punishing?

You bet it can! It can be embarrassing or upsetting. Occasionally, the consequence of pushing the button is to summon a grouch who bursts into the room with a "What now?" or a "Not *you* again?" It takes few such experiences for the weakened patient to find it easier to tolerate his distress than to press the button for help.

Industry is no less susceptible to the situation in which desired performance is more punishing than need be. For example, the flaunting of safety regulations despite "safety training" is a familiar problem. Though people often know how to recognize and report a safety hazard, they don't. Why not?

In some departments it is considered "rocking the boat" to report safety hazards (it usually implies that someone has been sloppy or irresponsible), and in some others it is considered unmanly ("Only sissies wear goggles," or "You gotta be a l'il ol' lady to use a saw guard.") But regardless of the reason, the consequence of hazard-reporting is punishment. A man may be looked down on by his peers, or he may have to bear the brunt of insults. He may even find the "rules" of the department "explained" to him with a fist. There are places where it simply isn't safe to report safety hazards!

Once a problem of this kind is identified as an example of "performance is punishing," it's plain that the solution is not the usual one of handing out more information. Though there may be a number of actions used as remedies, depending on the precise circumstances, each will have to be a way of reducing the undesirable results and increasing the desirable results of desired performance. Some companies provide a bonus or recognition to departments with perfect safety records, while others may tie desired privileges to an absence of accidents over an extended period of time.

For another common if less important example, take meeting-attending behavior. Time is wasted waiting for latecomers. It persists no matter how often instructions are given or exhortations are delivered. Plainly, this isn't a miniature training problem. To get at the true problem, you have to ask: "What's the consequence of performing as desired?"

What are the results of coming on time? Well, you have to sit around and wait for latecomers.

What's the result of being late? The meeting starts almost as soon as you arrive.

Thus, punctuality is punished and tardiness is rewarded. And that's precisely the opposite of what is intended.

Another interesting problem of this sort came to our attention not long ago. A bank decided, "We've got to teach our branch managers to be a little less conservative about making loans." The remainder of the conversation with management went like this:

"Do these branch managers know how to be riskier about making loans?"

"Yes. They merely have to accept those loan applications closest to the top of the reject pile."

"Do they know you want them to be less conservative?"

"Oh, yes. We have been sending them corporate memos for the past six months, but it doesn't seem to do much good."

"What happens to the branch manager who takes a conservative stance?"

"All his loans are paid back and he is looked at favorably."

"What happens if he takes the riskier stance, as desired?"

“Well, if some of his loans default, his superiors rate his performance down.”

As we said, people learn to avoid the things they are hit with.



In summary, when it appears that someone knows how to perform as desired but doesn't, find out whether the desired performance leads to unpleasant results (unpleasant from *his* point of view). If so, the remedy is to find ways to reduce or eliminate the negative effects and to create, or increase the strength of, positive or desirable consequences. (It is quite possible, of course, to offer an incentive for something that someone cannot be expected to do. Such unreasonable expectations can lead not only to frustration on the part of the person trying to perform, but to a feeling of failure—of being no good, of being “bad.” Though a favorable consequence will increase the likelihood that desired actions *will* occur, or increase the frequency with which they do occur, it will only do so if the *desired* performance is *possible* performance. As the old saw says, “You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear unless you start with a silk sow.”)

What to do

Determine whether desired performance leads to unfavorable consequences.

How to do it

Ask these questions:

- What *is* the consequence of performing as desired?
- Is it punishing to perform as expected?
- Does *he* perceive desired performance as being geared to penalties?
- Would his world become a little dimmer (to him) if he performed as desired?

CHAPTER 9

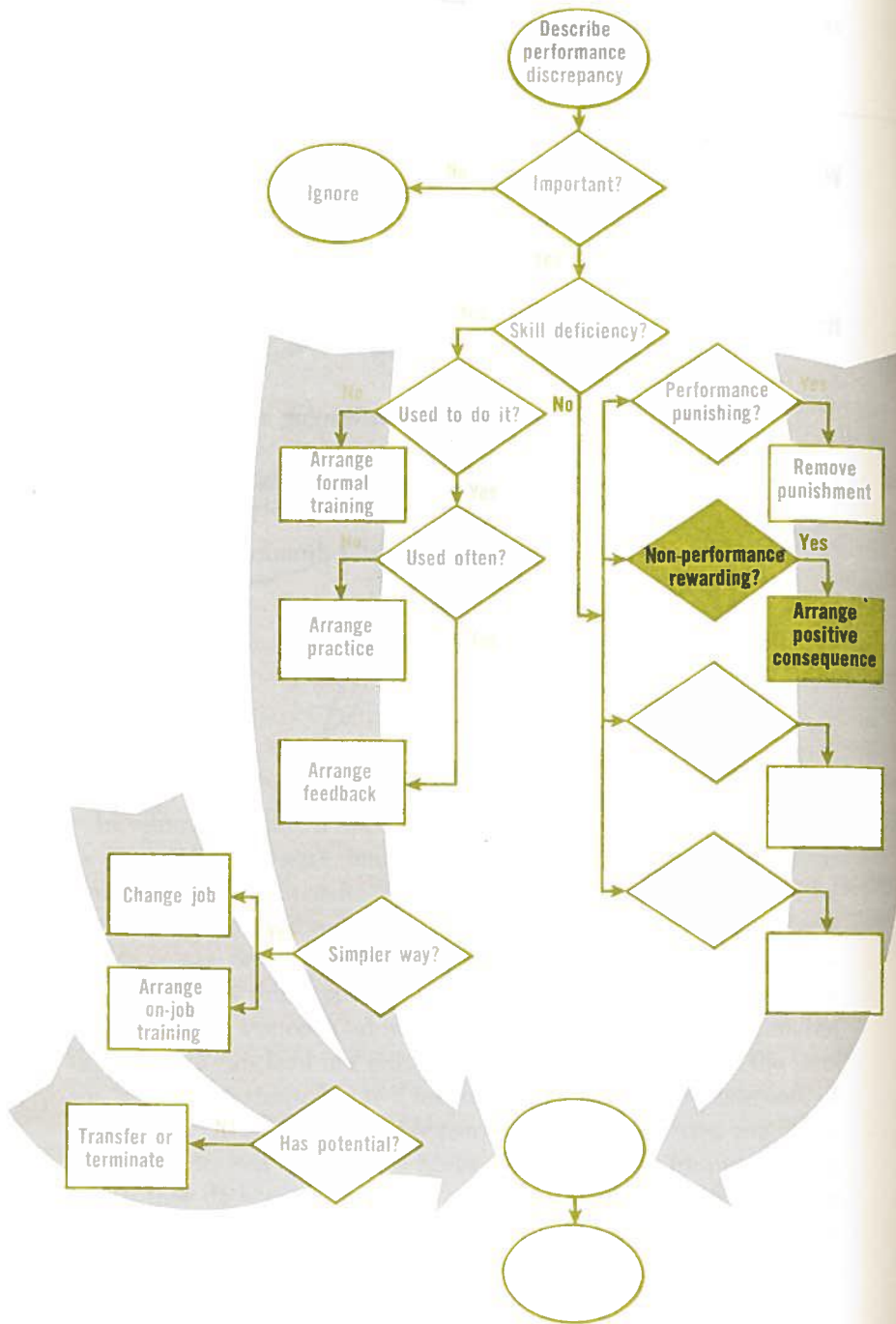
Is Non-performance Rewarding?

■ WHERE WE ARE

An important discrepancy is known or suspected not to be due to a skill deficiency.

In the last chapter, we examined the fact that sometimes people don't do what they know how to do because the doing leads to unpleasant results. So, in analyzing a performance discrepancy that does not appear to be due to a skill deficiency, one step to take is to see if unpleasant consequences follow the desired performance. But there is another side to that issue. Performance may not be as expected because *non-performing is rewarding*. That is, whether or not desired performance has favorable consequences, they are not as favorable as those of an other-than-desired performance. Thus, another step to take when looking for the cause of a "he-could-do-it-if-he-wanted-to-but-he-doesn't-and-he-oughta-wanna" problem is to explore the consequences of the thing he is doing *now*.

Two examples of people performing in ways that are other than desirable include the maternity ward receptionist who makes you fill out a dozen documents when it's obvious that the arrival of your child is imminent, and the petty bureaucrat who counters all of your



attempts to get something done with a regulation that says you can't, but who never offers a hint of the right course to follow.

If you take the view that these people are supposed to facilitate rather than obstruct, you have to assume that they are performing in an undesirable manner. Obstructive behavior must be more rewarding than facilitating behavior, even though the formal rewards of the job (pay, promotions) are apparently tied to the latter.

Push back at one of these functionaries and you will quickly be told, "I'm just doing my job. I don't make the rules."

Some of these misguided souls, finding no other satisfaction in their work, get satisfaction (attention?) from exerting petty tyranny over others. Others may be speaking the literal but partial truth when they say, "I'm just doing my job." They should add for the sake of accuracy, ". . . in a way that I perceive that my superiors want it done." Their perceptions may be far from accurate.

In all cases, something positive can be done. For the petty tyrant, one has to find a way to make him glow for performing in the desirable way. (And since this may be hard to do, one may have to fall back on the last-but-not-least alternative: change the job or change the man). For the person who has an inaccurate picture of what his superiors want, there's plainly a need to spell out the true intent, to make sure he knows what is to be done and can recognize when it has been done properly.

Here's a similar example: "We've got to teach that foreman to train his men." (It's the production manager of a manufacturing company speaking.) "Training is his responsibility."

The foreman knew what his men needed to know, all right; but he didn't tell them, and production suffered.

Why didn't he do what needed to be done? What did he get out of keeping his men ignorant?

Status! Anyone who wanted to know what was going on had to talk to the foreman. The foreman was cock of the roost; and, by keeping his subordinates uninformed, he thought he would stay that way. It was more rewarding (in *his* perception) not to perform as expected.

Solution? Not training. Make it matter to perform as desired.

And another example. In one of the large gold mines of Africa, the management once decided that they had a training problem involving African workers who operated the drilling rigs on the mine face. "We've got to teach these men to wear their ear plugs," they said. The discussion with one of the managers went something like this:

"What happens if these men don't wear their ear plugs?"

"Why, they go stone deaf from the unbelievable noise."

"Do they know *how* to wear their ear plugs?"

"Of course. All they have to do is stick them into their ears."

"Do they have the plugs handy?"

"Yes. They carry them in their pocket. As a matter of fact, they are checked when they enter the mine to make sure they *do* have their ear plugs with them."

"I see. So they know how to wear the plugs, and the plugs are always available?"

"That's right. But they don't wear them, and they really should."

"Why?"

"Why, to keep from going deaf, of course. Nobody oughta wanna go deaf."

"Do you have any idea why they *don't* wear their ear plugs?"

"You know why they don't wear their ear plugs? They don't wear their ear plugs because this is the highest job an African can have in this mine . . . and he wears his deafness like a *status symbol*."

Well, that put a new light on the problem. Then it was seen for what it was, a problem where performing as desired wasn't nearly as rewarding as performing otherwise. Loss of hearing was more desirable than loss of status. Notice again that all the training in the world is not likely to get those ear plugs worn.

No doubt you can think of several possible solutions when the problem is posed in this manner: How can management make "being a driller" more visible to the outside world than deafness?

It's a fact that there's a whole world out there just filled with people who are not doing as you would like. Not all are acting against your wishes because they don't know any better or because

they don't know how to do differently. Most behave the way they do because they feel that *their* way leads to more favorable consequences for them than does *your* way. If you want them to do differently, you will have to invent a way to reverse things so that your way leads to the rosier results.

Why do you suppose all those people in the prisons of our land don't straighten up and live right when they are released? Certainly they know we *want* them to do so, and many know *how* to do so. They also know it is important to do so if they are to avoid pursuit and arrest. But they don't. Why?

In some way their "contrary" behavior is more rewarding, has more payoff, leads to more desirable outcomes. When the pros and cons (steady there!) are weighed, the cons win out. There may be some undesirable consequences of a life of crime, of course; but, on balance, the advantages must be perceived by the criminal to outweigh the disadvantages.

This is an appropriate point to re-emphasize that problems of this kind do not always fall so neatly into categories as do our examples. Typically, problems have elements of more than one of the categories we have discussed, or they can move from one category to another.

In this chapter we have looked at cases where the consequences of undesired performance were more favorable than those that followed desired performance. Now consider this case. How often, when you have guests, do you rush over to where the kids are playing quietly in the corner and say, "Hey, kids, you're doing a *great* job of playing quietly in the corner"? Or do you, like most of us, wait until they start acting up and *then* rush over to scold?*

One can argue that you are, at best, providing no consequence for desired behavior. There may be favorable results for playing quietly in the corner, but *you* aren't the source of them.

A gloomier view of the situation is this: If *attention from parent* is viewed by your child as desirable, what must he do to get it?

*Our thanks to Lloyd Homme for this example.

When you ignore episodes of peace and quiet but attend to the uproars, you strengthen the likelihood that you will be confronted by an uproar.

An old expression fits here: It's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. Might not this be why people feel that to get action they must do something other than behave in a manner resembling "sitting quietly in the corner"?

We're not suggesting, by the way, that you "spoil" your children by refraining from admonition when they misbehave. We are only making the point that when you forget to "glow after good" as well as "growl after bad," you run the risk of making the growl a rosier consequence than you intend.



- PP: Bob, tell them about the apes at your house.
 RFM: What do you mean?
 PP: Well, the gibbons live in a cage in the family room, right?
 RFM: Right.
 PP: And what happens when the family is watching TV that gets you all upset?
 RFM: Well, the apes will bang their metal food dish against the screen of their cage. They bang and bang, and make such a racket we can't hear the program.
 PP: And?
 RFM: And they oughta wanna *not do that*.

PP: What happens when they do it?

RFM: Why, someone gets up and gives them something to eat to shut them up.

PP: So dish banging is followed by food?

RFM: Right. But they oughta wanna not bang their dish *anyhow*. We keep telling them to stop monkeying around . . . but it doesn't seem to do any good.

Even our educational establishment is loaded with examples of conditions or consequences that make someone's world brighter for *not* performing as you wish.

Let's begin with an analogy. Suppose that while walking in the park you come upon a man standing in front of two plants and muttering to himself. He is using a watering can to water one of the plants. You ask him what he is doing.



"I'm trying to make *that* one grow," he replies, and points to the *other* one.

"Well," you might ask, puzzled, "if you want *that* one to grow, why are you watering *this* one?"

"Because it oughta wanna grow anyhow!"

Whacky? Of course. Yet this is very much like the way our school system is operated.

The chief goal of a school is to help students' capabilities grow—to change their state of knowledge, skill, and understanding. Thus, the measure of success is the degree to which the students' capabilities are increased. Since student performance is what is desired, one would think that the rewards of the system (money, raises, position, status) would be strongly tied to the primary reason for its existence. Yet this appears not to be the case. Look at the salary schedule of nearly every school and you will find that the rewards (favorable consequences) of the system have little direct relationship to effective teaching. Raises and promotions are based almost exclusively on the number of months served and the number of academic credit hours earned. There is little or no attempt to tie these rewards (for the teacher) to the quantity and quality of student performance.

In these circumstances, to say that the teacher oughta wanna teach more effectively is to behave like the nut with the sprinkling can; it is demanding one kind of performance while rewarding another.

At the university level, the situation is even more bizarre. Here the professor gets his promotions and raises not on how well he succeeds with students, but on the basis of how much he publishes, how many government grants he is able to garner, and the number of committees on which he serves. Again, he is exhorted to do one thing while being rewarded for another.

Since people tend to do those things that brighten their world, the moral is:

Water the performance you want to grow.

Think for a moment about the expression "resistance to change." It's a judgment often made about people who don't perform as desired. But the expression is misleading, because it puts a derogatory emphasis where it doesn't belong. When people oppose the introduction of some new idea or thing, there usually isn't an *active* resistance in force. Often, people cling to the old because there is *no real reason*, no favorable consequence to *them*, for doing it the new way. It is more comfortable, more pleasant, more rewarding to stay with the old. So here again, simply plying people with information

about the new thing or exhorting them that they oughta wanna be in favor of newness may not change much. The desired performance (the new thing) will be more readily adopted (and made to work during any “teething troubles”) if it is plain to the doer how it will make his world brighter.

In much the same way, the teacher passes the blame for his own failure to be interesting by complaining about the student’s “short attention span.” Much better if he approached the problem by asking himself, “What’s the consequence to the student if he does pay attention?” If the honest answer is “boredom,” then there isn’t much doubt where the remedy lies.

One more category can be listed here. Let’s call it the “don’t-let’s stick-our-necks-out-more-than-we-have-to” category. It’s found at many levels in the working world and private life, and can be found under at least two subheadings, the mental version and the physical version.

A typical instance of the first is found in the person who apparently “doesn’t like to take responsibility.” This is often a person who has discovered that when he makes a wrong decision he gets it in the neck. And if he gets it in the neck often enough and hard enough, he’s going to conclude that one way of shutting off aversive consequences is to make *fewer* of these decisions. Eventually, he establishes an equilibrium, making as few decisions as it is possible to make without getting genuine complaints that he’s loafing.

You can think of your own examples of students who try but get poor grades and children who seem reluctant to do chores.

That’s the mental aspect of the problem. The physical aspect is similar. Some activities are physically exacting; the more you do, the more tired you get. When getting excessively tired leads to no positive consequence (in the eyes of the doer, that is), he, too, finds a point of equilibrium.

When someone is exhibiting these symptoms, people may say, “He’s a good man, but . . .” Or, leaping sprightly to conclusions, they judge: “He’s not ambitious.” “He doesn’t care.” “He procrastinates.” Or worst of all, “He’s lazy.”

The person judged may not like to act this way. But, as he sees the world, the less he does, the less he has to answer for or the less he suffers. The consequence—or, more accurately in most cases, the sum of the consequences—for doing more was not worth the effort.

Maybe he doesn’t have the mental or physical stuff to perform as you would like. But if you’re the one in charge of the consequences that come to him as a result of action or non-action, maybe you should take a close look at those consequences to make sure they are worthy of the effort you are expecting.

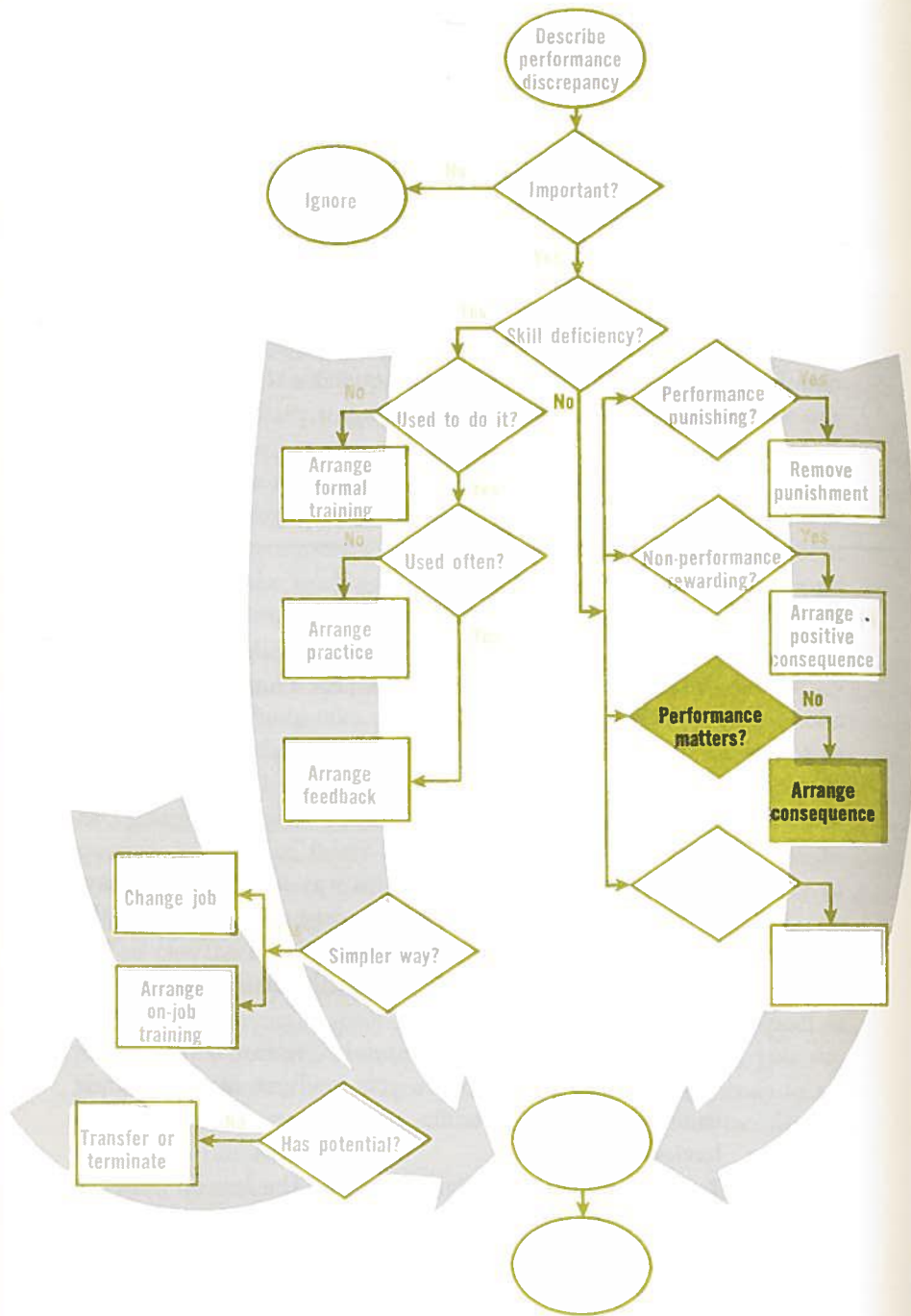
What to do

Determine whether *non*-performance or *other* performance leads to more favorable consequences than would desired performance.

How to do it

Ask these questions:

- What is the result of doing it his way instead of my way?
- What does he get out of his present performance in the way of reward, prestige, status, jollies?
- Does he get more attention for *misbehaving* than for *behaving*?
- What event in the world *supports* (rewards) his present way of doing things? (Are you inadvertently rewarding irrelevant behavior while overlooking the crucial behaviors?)
- Is he “mentally inadequate,” so that the less he does the less he has to worry about?
- Is he physically inadequate, so that he gets less tired if he does less?



CHAPTER 10

Does Performing Really Matter?

■ WHERE WE ARE

An important discrepancy is known or suspected not to be due to a skill deficiency.

Sometimes a performance discrepancy continues to exist *neither* because the performer doesn't know how to perform *nor* because he isn't motivated, but because it simply doesn't matter whether or not he performs. Nothing happens if he takes the trouble to perform as someone wants; nothing happens if he doesn't.

The laws of behavior tell us that when a performance is not followed at least periodically by an event considered favorable by the performer, that performance will tend to disappear. If there is nothing to make it worth doing, it will tend not to get done.

An important point (because few people seem to grasp it): Wagging your forefinger at someone and telling him, "You oughta wanna," does *not* qualify as a universal incentive to action.

A common instance of this cause of a performance discrepancy comes from that generally unpleasant area known as paperwork. Managers complain, "Reports just don't get in on time," or "Those reports are haphazardly done."

In such instances, the conversation continues like this: "The reports are sloppily done?"

"They certainly are. And they don't come in on time."

"Why not, do you suppose?"

"They just don't seem to care!"

"What happens if the reports are late?"

"Well, then I have to explain to my superiors why I am late with *my* reports."

"No, no. What happens to the person who submits the report?"

"Well, nothing, I guess. But he oughta wanna get them in on time."

"What happens if the reports are sloppily done?"

"Disaster! My poor secretary runs herself ragged trying to get them cleaned up in time to attach to my own report."

"Yes, but what happens to the man who sends in the sloppy work?"

"Well, nothing, I guess."

"You don't phone him or drop him a memo to tell him he has not met expected standards?"

"No."

"You don't send the reports back for *him* to correct?"

"Heavens, no. There's never *time*."

"So it doesn't really matter *to the man* whether his reports are well done and on time?"

"No, I guess not. But he oughta wanna do them right."

Let's not get caught up in a debate about the importance of paperwork. The example is intended to illustrate that desired performance is less likely to be attained when that performance does not matter to the performer, when the perceived consequence is the same to the performer whether he does it right or some other way.

Around 1960, many programmed instruction enthusiasts began exhorting publishers to be concerned about the effectiveness of the books they publish. "From now on you must publish materials that work," they said. "You must test them and modify them until they *do* work." And they added, "You must have the data available to the user so that he can tell exactly what your materials do and how well they do it."

One or two publishers did just that. They went through all the stages, and made available the data describing the effectiveness of the finished product. But after a while there was some backsliding. We vividly remember a discussion with one sincere and dedicated publisher who told us why. "In the period of an entire year," he said, "we had *two* requests from teachers for information about how well the programs work. It was as though nobody cared whether they worked or not. There was just this big silence."

Here again, it simply didn't seem to matter whether the publisher performed as the programming enthusiasts desired. There was no meaningful consequence. It's easy to say the publisher oughta wanna do things according to the state of the art, that it would be the honorable thing to do, or that he ought to get personal satisfaction from doing so. But the reality is that it costs a lot of time and money to refine materials until they do a specific job reliably; and without a meaningful consequence, this kind of effort will likely shrink to a mere trickle of good intention.

Recently a professor of music was exasperated about a discrepancy he noted in his conducting class. "I have a student who just slashes his baton up and down like a kid with a flyswatter. I just can't get him to do it *right*," he told us. After some discussion of the situation he finally said, "No, for him it just doesn't seem to matter. He seems to be able to communicate to the orchestra, and they do everything he wants them to do. But he ought to want to be more elegant when he conducts."

Here is a case of a man who gets results his way that are just as good as if he used the professor's way. Why *should* he change when there doesn't seem to be any real reason to do so (other than for a grade)?

And here's a common "problem" solved by ingenuity. A professor kept urging his students to "sit down front" when attending lectures and demonstrations in the tiered classroom. But students continued to sit in the back. "If you sit in the front," the professor would tell the students, "I won't have to talk so loudly." But they still sat in the back.

Someone finally hit on an idea—it was adopted and the problem was solved. The solution? The first five rows of seats were upholstered; the remaining rows were left with hardwood chairs. Then almost everyone tried to get to class early so they could sit down front.

Meanwhile, nearer home, you have undoubtedly heard your neighbor complain that his offspring simply will not pick up after himself, no matter how often he is told. If you were to listen to a conversation between this parent and someone skilled in the use of our checklist, you might hear:

“He doesn’t pick up after himself, even though you’ve made it clear you expect him to?”

“I’ve told him and I’ve told him, but it doesn’t do any good.”

“And he knows where to put the clothes?”

“Of *course* he does. He isn’t stupid, you know.”

“Sorry. Ah, tell me, what is the result of his not picking up after himself?”

“The result? The result is that I spend half *my* time picking up after him. *That’s* the result!”

“I understand. But what’s the result to *him*?”

“I nag.”

“And how about if he does pick up?”

“What do you mean?”

“Does something favorable happen if he picks up after himself for a certain period of time—like an extra movie, or a round of applause from the family, or a favorite meal, or something else he might like to have?”

“Certainly *not!* You don’t think I’m going to *bribe* him to do something he oughta wanna do anyhow, do you?”

[*Bribe* is a loaded word, carrying a connotation of something illegal or designed to make someone do something against his will, breaking moral laws. But bribery is a concept having to do with ethics rather than with the laws of behavior. What we’re talking about is a *positive consequence* that, if you like loaded words, could as well be called a *reward*. By providing a positive consequence, we increase

the probability that behavior will occur. Even when we do something we don’t like to do (when, say, we submit to surgery), we do it because we expect that life will be improved as a result. But we don’t look on “getting better as a result of surgery” as a bribe. When a mother says to her child, “If you pick up your clothes for a week, I’ll take you to a movie,” it is not bribery. It is the offer of an incentive (a consequence desired by the child) in return for performance desired by the mother.]

In this case, the performance discrepancy is that the youngster doesn’t pick up his clothes in the desired manner with the desired regularity. He knows how to do it, but he doesn’t do it. Thus, the discrepancy is not likely to be eliminated by training or instruction. His world doesn’t get brighter if he does as expected; and, since he’s so used to being nagged that he doesn’t even hear it, his world doesn’t get dimmer if he doesn’t. In effect, nothing meaningful happens one way or the other. There is no consequence for performing as desired, so he tends not to.

Again, it is easy to say that he oughta wanna pick up after himself because it is the adult thing, the right thing, the moral thing, the mother-saving thing, etc. And some day, probably, he *will* pick up after himself, because it matters to his self-concept or his convenience to do so. But right now there are none of these *internal* consequences. If you expect him to perform, then, you must see to it that his performance is followed by an *external* consequence that has value *for him*.

Another interesting example is found in the inspection departments of some manufacturing companies. One of the duties is that of inspecting incoming materials. In one such plant, the features to be evaluated include the smoothness of various metal surfaces. The inspector checks to see if the smoothness meets or surpasses specifications. If it does, the material is accepted and sent on to the production department. If not smooth enough, the material is returned to the vendor.

It was noticed that inspectors were rejecting material that was, in fact, smooth enough to be accepted. “We have a training problem,”

said a manager. "We need to teach these inspectors to be more accurate in their smoothness judgments."

By now you are probably ahead of us and know that training wasn't the solution.

To the question, "What is the consequence of performing as desired?" a double answer appeared. To the inspectors, the result of rejecting a good batch was nothing. The batch went back to the vendor; and the vendor, knowing the game, probably let it sit in his warehouse for a month or so and then resubmitted it. On the other hand, accepting a bad batch brought the wrath of the production department down on an inspector's head.

Thus, there was no noticeable consequence of rejecting a good batch of material (undesirable performance), but it was punishing to accept a bad batch of material (also undesirable performance). The result was that the inspectors, without even realizing it, gradually rejected more and more good batches in order to avoid the punishment that came with accepting a bad one. This was not a conscious action; it just happened.

There are a number of options for correcting this kind of problem. Management could act to make both undesirable alternatives equally undesirable to the inspectors. Since the inspectors *want* to perform well, one could also make the accuracy of their performance more immediately visible to them. If an inspector knew he was making a bad decision, he wouldn't make it. In this case, performance feedback would probably do the trick.

Actually, however, a third alternative was selected, mostly because of the awkwardness and time needed in providing immediate feedback. Since this situation turned out to be a combination of a skill maintenance and a no-consequence problem, a little device was constructed with which the inspectors could periodically check their smoothness perceptions. The device provided a number of graded samples for an inspector to judge, and then told him whether he was right or wrong. He wasn't learning anything he didn't already know, but he *was* keeping his skill sharpened. It would have also helped to equalize the consequence for either of the undesired performances

(accepting a bad batch or rejecting a good one), or to have increased the consequence of good performance, but to our knowledge this was not arranged.

As mentioned elsewhere, many discrepancies have elements of more than one cause; this was one such example.

In summary, when you're dealing with a case where it looks as though a person *could* perform if he had to or wanted to, one of the things to look for is the *consequence* of doing it. If there *isn't any*—at least if there isn't any that is considered favorable by the person expected to perform differently—then the remedy that suggests itself is to arrange one.

When you want someone to perform in some particular manner, one rule is:

Make it matter.

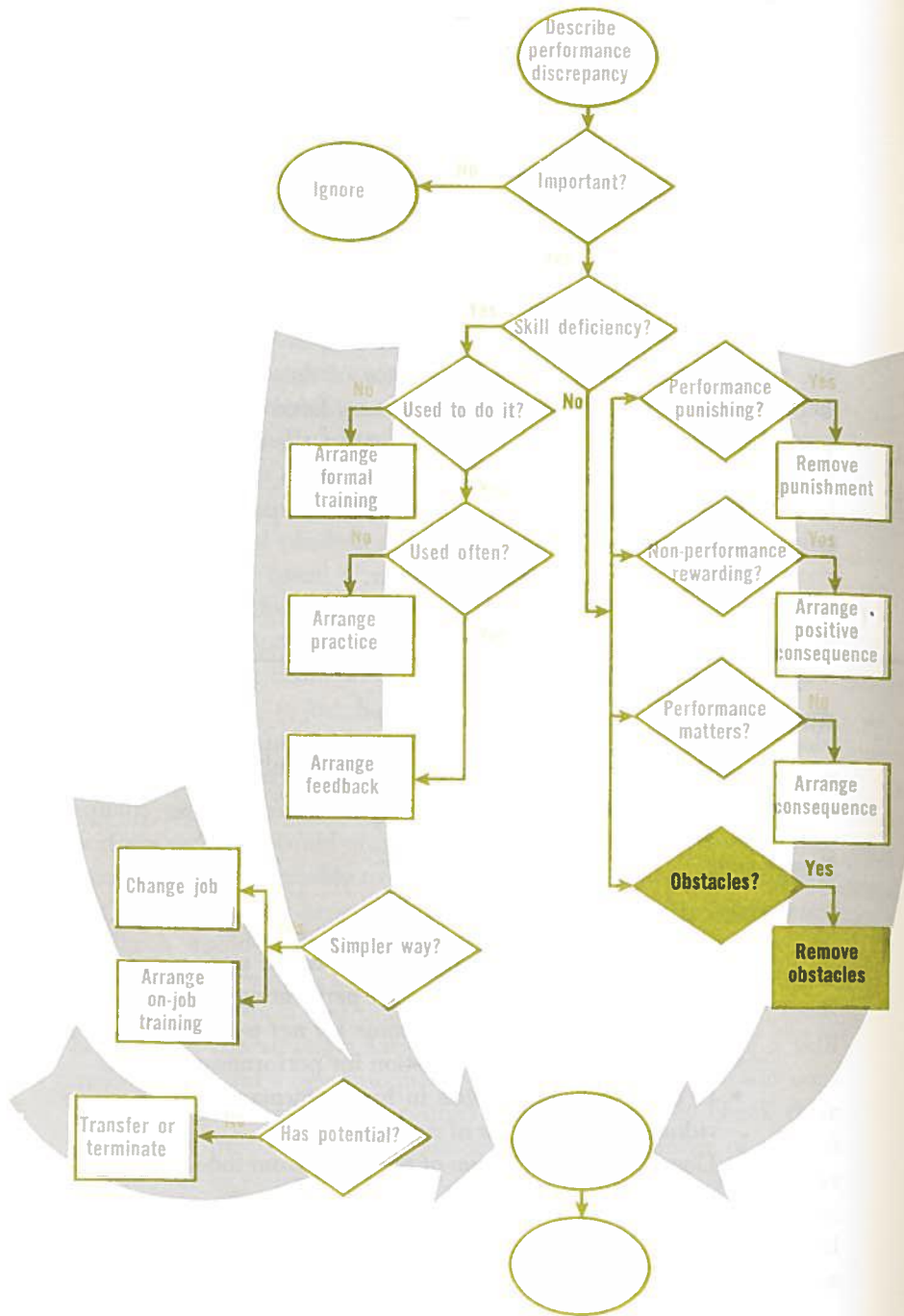
What to do

Determine whether there is a meaningful consequence for the desired performance.

How to do it

Ask these questions:

- Does performing as desired matter to the performer?
- Is there a favorable outcome for performing?
- Is there an undesirable outcome for *not* performing?
- Is there a source of satisfaction for performing?
- Is he able to take pride in his performance, as an individual or as a member of a group?
- Does he get satisfaction of *his* needs from the job?



Are There Obstacles to Performing?

■ WHERE WE ARE

An important discrepancy is known or suspected not to be due to a skill deficiency.

If he knows how to do it, isn't doing it, but ought to do it, there are four general causes to look for:

1. It's punishing to do it.
2. It's rewarding *not* to do it.
3. It doesn't matter whether he does it.
4. There are obstacles to doing it.

We have discussed the first three; now we'll consider the issue of obstacles.

Have you ever said to yourself, "I could do this job perfectly well if only the &*%\$#@% telephone would stop ringing and those idiots next door would stop pestering me so that I could concentrate for five minutes at a time"?

That's a perfect example of a situation in which a job would get done more efficiently if the conditions were changed—without the need for instruction. It's a typical problem for people in all walks

of life. The victim would do an acceptable job, if only he could get *at* the job. Some are more stoical about this than others, of course. The lower we are in the pecking order, the more likely it is that we'll tolerate an obstacle, since we are not in the happy position of being able to tell the boss, "Quit bugging me!"

We know that in industry it is courting inefficiency, if not disaster, to organize in a way that gives a man more than one boss. Inevitably it happens that in trying to please one, he must neglect the interests of others. Multiple-bossism is recognized as bad management. Yet in our schools a student has as many bosses as he has teachers, each putting demands upon his time and attention and, frequently, each imposing different rules. When the student fails to meet the demands and follow the rules, unfavorable consequences follow. And eventually the student can end up saying, "I hate school."

Now this is not to say that no student ever goofed off. But it does indicate that we might get more from students (and students might get more satisfaction from school) if we paid more heed to the conditions under which they are expected to perform.

Teachers, too, are prevented from doing a better job by the conditions under which they work. Too often, the teacher is expected to collect milk money, keep interminable records, and otherwise devote considerable time to chores just as well handled at a clerical level. We have talked to teachers in many colleges who are expected to use films, slides, and other visual materials freely. But the equipment and help they need are available only from a remote (but oh-so-central) location, through a flurry of paperwork administered by an office that is not always open for business when the teacher can go there.

Here's another example. Imagine yourself called in by the personnel director of a French department store. He engages you in the following conversation:

"Monsieur, I have a training problem."

"Yes?"

"Oui. I would like you to prepare a programmed instruction course on salesmanship for our sales clerks."

"I see."

"How much will it cost?"

What do you reply? You know that training is a solution, not a problem, and that the personnel director hasn't said a single word about his problem. He has only told you what he has decided on as a solution. (Though it would be a mistake to enter into a discussion of cost at this point, it would be an even bigger mistake to imply that he didn't know what he was talking about or that he has no business talking solutions until he understands the problem.)

What is needed is more information, information that will explain why this man thinks (1) that his employees need sales training and (2) that the training should be in a particular format.

In answer to such questions, the personnel director responded that his concern was triggered by the fact that gross receipts were not what they should be.

Now the amount of money taken in by a store is only partly related to the skill of its sales clerks. Since in further questioning the director said nothing directly related to sales clerks and their abilities, we began to wonder if the cause of the problem might be elsewhere. We asked to be shown around the store. Within a few minutes, we noted several clumps of people gathered around cash registers trying to give the clerks money to complete a transaction. Then we found that some merchandise was placed on the counters according to manufacturer rather than according to type. If you wanted to look at transistor radios, for example, you might first go to the Phillips department to see what they had, and then walk to the Telefunken department (some distance away) to see what they had there.

In some ways, this is typical of the situations wrongly labeled "training problems." Basically, what is wrong is that management has rushed to a solution without first looking at other elements of the problem. Here, as in most situations involving those infinitely variable entities called people, there is probably no perfect solution to yield a perfect answer. But there are usually some solutions that are superior to others in terms of return for effort expended.

It's not too much to say that the management of this store singled out the element that was most visible and most under its control, and made it the scapegoat for an important discrepancy. They then identified a solution that involved changing the sales clerks in some way.

The trouble with premature identification of solutions is that they block off exploration of other problem elements. We tend to say to ourselves, "Well, that's that. We've nailed down what we're going to do. Now let's get on with doing it." Because we feel "We're doing something about it," some of the burden of the problem has been lifted from our shoulders.

It's probably clear, however, that other elements contributed to the store's problem. In studying the procedures, it became plain that the store's policies almost seemed designed to prevent customers from buying or, having once bought, to discourage them from coming back again. It was hard to find what one wanted. It was hard to complete a purchase. Once the sales procedures were revised and the time to complete a transaction was reduced, sales increased.

The training director of a dynamite factory overseas told of an instance where all the training in the world would have been useless in solving the problem.

He was called by a plant manager. "I've got a training problem," said the manager. "These people are lazy. They fall asleep on the job, and they don't come to work regularly. I want you to come up here and teach them their jobs. I want you to teach them to be motivated."

The training director was too smart to fall into the trap of taking a statement like that at face value, especially since it began with the usual confusion of problem with solution. Knowing his human relations, he replied, "I'll come and take a look around so that I can see more clearly what needs to be taught." (It doesn't get you very far to tell a client he is probably wrong in his diagnosis. It works better to agree that he has a problem and then do your analysis out loud, hoping that *he* will spot the difficulty.)

The training director went to the site, looked around, talked to people, and reviewed employee records. All the while, he was asking

himself whether he was dealing with a skill deficiency—and, if not, why the men were not performing as expected.

He found the answer in an unexpected place—the medical office. Better than 60 percent of the employees in question were suffering from a disease that shows up in symptoms of sleeping sickness. *Of course* these men were falling asleep on the job. *Of course* their attendance was spotty.

But there wasn't anything wrong with their skill or with their motivation. They were simply sick. Once cured, all was well.

Again, all the training in the world would not have done much good. Had the training director simply done what he was asked, his training program would have failed. Then the plant manager might have said, "Why spend all this money on a training department? We'd be better off without 'em." And what's more, if the training department continually used training as a solution for the wrong problems, he'd be right.

Thus, if performance discrepancies appear *not* to be due to a lack of skill or motivation, one thing to look for is the *obstacle*. "I can't do it" isn't always just an alibi; it can be an accurate description of the situation. And if you will look around to see what might be obstructing performance, you will find the solution to at least some of your performance problems.

Obstacles can take many forms and, as illustrated by the case of the dynamite workers, may appear in unlikely places. A few years ago, one of us was asked to review a division of a company and make whatever recommendations for improvement seemed appropriate. Things were going pretty well, so this was not one of the instances that begins with "I've got a training problem." Production was down a little, but it was not a matter of panic proportions, although puzzling.

As is customary, two or three days were spent soaking in the activities of the division, working from inspectors of incoming material toward the loading dock.

It was learned that though production was sagging, nothing else had changed. There was no new product that people had to learn

how to build. The same employees were still on the scene. There were no new, complicated machines to master. There seemed to be no morale or personality problems of any significance. Parts were flowing smoothly to the supply bins. Tools were plentiful and in good working order.

Then what?

The answer, the ridiculous answer, was discovered while sitting with some spot welders at their workbenches. It was noticed that they were rather slow in getting up to refill their empty parts bins. Why? They were one stool short on the production floor! Getting up meant that your stool might be gone when you returned. So each girl dawdled when her bins were empty, and each spent time carving her initials or taping identifying marks on "her" stool.

For want of a stool . . . Clearly there was an obstacle to desired performance.



And there was the student who was failed on an examination because he left the answer sheet blank. "Your *attitude* is terrible," said the teacher. "Can you give me one good reason why you didn't fill in a single answer on this test?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I didn't have a pencil."

Another form of obstacle to desired performance that is seldom identified as such is that of absence of information about what is wanted. If a person doesn't *know* that he is expected to perform in some way, he may fail to do so, even though he knows how to do so. At the risk of offending a small minority, we will generalize that nobody can read minds. If you want someone to perform in a particular way, let him in on the secret. Tell him what is expected, and tell him what the standards are. Note the examples that follow.

The Case of the Secret Agenda

The secret agenda is too common in industry. It often shows up in discussions with the bewildered employee who has just been demoted or booted clear off the payroll.

"What did you do that got you fired?" one might ask.

And you might receive a reply like this: "I don't know! I honestly don't know. My performance reviews were all favorable . . . and my boss kept telling me I was doing a good job. Then, all of a sudden, I was fired. I honestly don't know why."

Although it is probably true that some employees pretend ignorance of the reason for their sudden separation, it would be foolish to assume that all of them are being deceitful. More likely it never occurred to anyone to tell the employee what was expected of him, or perhaps those in charge were not mature enough to inform him of what he was doing to cause the displeasure of the establishment.

The Case of the Hidden Hatchet

A large company recently took a look at its course for management trainees. When the course was analyzed for effectiveness, it was

noted that some trainees were let go at the end of instruction even though their technical performance was good or adequate. When we asked why, we were told it was because these trainees manifested some personal characteristics considered inappropriate for an executive.

Had these characteristics ever been brought to the attention of the trainees so that they might have a chance to change them? No. Why not? Because it is hard to tell a man that you don't like the color of his ties or that his nose-scratching is offensive. It is easier to tell him that he is not suitable for the job, or to mumble something about performance, and fire him.

The course now includes a personality checklist that the training supervisor *must* fill out and show the trainees each month. In this way, trainees who exhibit behaviors considered objectionable by management will have an opportunity to change if they so desire.

The Case of the Elusive Evaluation

The faculty of a medical school once complained, "These students of ours will argue for hours over half a point on our written exams. Yet it isn't the *written* exams that are important. We've got to teach them to be less concerned with those darned paper-and-pencil tests." The rest of the conversation went like this.

"The students really care about their performance on the written tests?"

"Yes. And they shouldn't. It's the *subjective* evaluations the staff makes of the students that are important."

"When is this evaluation made?"

"All day and every day our staff members are noting and evaluating each student's actual performance. We note how he performs with patients in the clinic, with other students, and with staff, and how he performs in the lab."

"How do you consolidate the results of these subjective evaluations?"

"We compare notes."

"Who does?"

"The staff. We get together and discuss the progress of each student."

"Is the student present?"

"Certainly not."

"So the results of the written exams are *visible* to the student, but the results of subjective evaluations are *invisible* to him?"

"Yes. But visible or not, it's the subjective evaluations that are really important; and that's what students ought to be interested in."

You can imagine how difficult it was to refrain from asking point-blank, "If they're *that* important, why keep them such a big secret?"

The Case of the Masticating Menace

We met a man highly competent and creative in his field who, we were told, is avoided by friends and business associates alike. Associates dread having to take him along to meet clients if a meal is involved, because he chomps his food with his mouth open—and talks while doing so. He's done it for years, and for years people have avoided taking him to business meals. So far, nobody has had the nerve—or the consideration—to tell him about it.

So why should he change?

How many executives have been fired, kicked upstairs, or retired because their superiors had the position but not the guts to tell them about an offensive but easy-to-correct habit?

How many teachers must there be who return test results to students days, even weeks, after the test was taken, and who then complain that student performance isn't any better than it is—and that the students don't seem to care?

Might your relations with others improve if you could know how they really feel about your present words and actions? Would you be willing to give up using a particular expression, or a gesture, if you knew it was offensive to someone you cared about?

Closely related to not knowing *that* you are expected to do something, is not knowing *when* you are expected to do it. For example,

a physical scientist working in the laboratory of a rather large corporation confided that he had been rated down by his boss because of what the boss referred to as an “undesirable characteristic.”

“My boss said I didn’t know how to keep my mouth shut,” complained the scientist.

“And *can* you?” he was asked.

“*Of course* I can. Discretion is the name of the game in the lab I work in. If I couldn’t keep my mouth shut, I’d have been out of a job long ago.”

“Then what do you suppose the boss is complaining about?”

“Well, every once in a while he calls me into a meeting and asks me to tell them what I *really* think about something or other. And I do.”

“And that’s bad?”

“Only sometimes. Occasionally there is someone sitting in the meeting from another division, or even from a customer’s company, and I’m not aware of it. *Then* when my boss asks what I really think, he seems to want me to say something to make the company look good rather than tell him what I really think. Trouble is . . . I can never tell when to do which.”

Thus, if a person is unable to tell *when* to perform in a particular way, if he can’t recognize the signal, somebody might conclude that he doesn’t know *how*.

In summary, if it looks as though a person knows how to perform but doesn’t perform, look for obstacles. Look for things that might be getting in the way of his performing as desired. Look for his lack of authority, lack of time, or lack of tools. Look for poorly placed or poorly labeled equipment. Look for bad lighting and uncomfortable surroundings. Look for lack of *direct* information about *what* to do and *when* to do it. Above all, keep in mind that if he *can* do it but isn’t doing it, there is a reason; and only seldom is the reason either a lack of interest or a lack of motivation or desire. Most people want to do a good job. When they don’t, it is often because of an obstacle in the world around them.

What to do

Determine whether there are obstacles preventing the desired performance.

How to do it

Ask these questions:

- What prevents him from performing?
- Does he know *what* is expected of him?
- Does he know *when* to do what is expected of him?
- Are there conflicting demands on his time?
- Does he lack the authority?
 - . . . the time?
 - . . . the tools?
- Is he restricted by policies or by a “right way of doing it” or “way we’ve always done it” that ought to be changed?
- Can I reduce interference by improving lighting?
 - . . . changing colors?
 - . . . increasing comfort?
 - . . . modifying the work position?
 - . . . reducing visual or auditory distractions?
- Can I reduce “competition from the job”—phone calls, “brush fires,” demands of less important but more immediate problems?