

SAA ARCHIVES
MANAGEMENT
ROUNDTABLE
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BOOK REVIEW

Fournies, Ferdinand E. *Why Employees Don't Do What They're Supposed to Do and What to Do about It*. Revised and updated edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, c1999. 167 p.

Fournies, a business consultant, surveyed 25,000 managers to learn their views on non-performance. He has authored a practical, nuts-and-bolts guide to being a take-charge manager. Employing a straightforward and simple style, he avoids buzzwords that are frequently used in discussions of management approaches.

As Fournies notes, "The key to success as a manager is intervening effectively, doing the right things at the right time." (149) By using the techniques described in his book, the manager can head off problems before they occur. He or she should focus on achieving tangible outcomes, rather than trying to ascertain the hidden factors at work in an employee's psyche.

The goal of the effective manager is to "get it right." Mistakes are costly to an organization; his or her aim should be to eliminate them as much as possible and turn the company into a learning community which benefits from increased productivity and positive innovation. The manager must be aware that he or she can contribute to the problem of non-performance: A reactive management style guarantees that non-performance will persist.

By contrast, the proactive manager conducts a series of interventions when his or her employees fail to perform to expectation. He or she conducts "preventive management." The goal is to clear up misunderstandings, which may be as simple as the meaning of the abbreviation "ASAP," and state clearly the manager's expectations regarding work.

Fournies reviews sixteen performance problems and appropriate responses to them. A brief review of selected nonperformance problems and the appropriate responses to them follows:

- 1) **The employee does not know why he should do something.** *Solution:* The manager should explain why the employee has to do tasks the right way. The manager outlines the problem, the goals of the work, and its consequences to the employee and the organization.
- 2) **The employee does not know how to do the work.** *Solution:* The manager should function as a teacher and emphasize training and practice.
- 3) **The employee thinks the manager's way will not work.** *Solution:* The manager should persuade the worker that his or her way is best. The manager must also offer evidence that his or her way has succeeded in the past.
- 4) **The employee thinks another task is more important.** *Solution:* The employee is misinformed about priorities. The manager can remedy this problem by designating work according to its importance and letting workers know when priorities change.
- 5) **There is no reward for the employee for doing the work.** *Solution:* The manager should offer verbal compliments to workers. These should be specific in nature.
- 6) **The employee thinks he is doing the work.** *Solution:* The manager should give feedback to the workers regarding their performance. The feedback must be

positive and timely, as well as focus on tangible behavior.

- 7) **The employee is rewarded for not doing the work.** *Solution:* The manager should make the worker correct mistakes. The manager should challenge employees with difficult assignments which they will learn to master.
- 8) **The employee is punished for doing what he or she is supposed to do.** This problem is particularly deleterious in the sense that workers avoid bringing up problems with their supervisors if met with sarcasm or hostility. *Solution:* The manager must express a wish to be kept posted on small problems before they become big ones and that all questions are valid.
- 9) **There is no negative consequence for poor performance.** *Solution:* The manager should resort to progressive discipline to correct unacceptable performance.
- 10) **Nonperformance occurs on account of obstacles beyond the employee's control.** *Solution:* The manager should take responsibility for removing workplace impediments.
- 11) **The employee has personal problems which impede his or her performance.** *Solution:* Managers need to avoid getting their employees off the hook when the latter express problems at home. If necessary, guide the employee to professional counseling, but don't function as an amateur psychologist.

Proactive managers discard the fallacious notion that hiring the right employee will minimize the need for management. Instead, they practice "preventive management," which utilizes interventions to produce specific outcomes or results. The manager needs to realize that he or she is very much in control of workers' productivity. "Work planning" is necessary to go over with the employee what needs to be done. The process will reveal any problems that stand in the way of the desired outcome.

Managers can also help themselves by

displaying consideration ("friendliness") toward their employees. They should smile and get to know their workers *as people*. A pleasant demeanor helps to increase productivity and deflect worker hostility from the manager. Given the problem of workplace violence today, "it might save your life." (141)

WORK BEGINS ON NEW SAA MANAGEMENT MANUAL

The Society of American Archivists recently signed a contract with Thomas Wilsted and Michael Kurtz to create an updated volume on managing archival repositories. The new volume will update the existing manual written by Wilsted and William Nolte in 1991.

The new manual will be divided into four sections. The introduction will cover such topics as leadership, new management paradigms, and management in cultural institutions. The second section will deal with planning, information technology, and organizational development. A third section will deal with human resource management and communication, and the fourth section will deal with finance, funding, facilities, and public relations.

The co-authors would welcome input from members of the Archives Management Roundtable as they begin their work. Please feel free to share articles, graphs, or other items of interest that you come across in the coming months. Once the initial text is complete, the authors will be seeking illustrative material including photographs. Again, feel free to share items that you think would be of interest. You can reach the authors at: twilsted@lib.uconn.edu or mike.kurtz@arch2.nara.gov.

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