



Hamilton-Chase Consulting

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applying
behavioral science
to enhance
executive and
organizational
performance

Caution: Career Derailment Ahead!

“Well-intentioned, hard-working people often have ‘blind spots’ about important tendencies. In fact, they may be the only ones in their group who do not realize that they have a problem.

Feedback is essential to learning. If people don’t fully appreciate their strengths, how can they use them to their advantage? If they never find out how their actions create problems for others, how will they know what to change?

Most people want this kind of feedback. They want to know what is working and what is not. They don’t like having blind spots, and they are interested in learning how to improve. They are willing to invest in themselves so they can achieve better results. The problem is that most of their coworkers don’t know how to give feedback in a constructive way and are not comfortable with confronting them about performance issues.”

- Dennis E. Coates, Ph.D.

Research studies have pegged failure rates for senior executives at up to 33%. Why do executives, managers, and professionals either derail or flounder and then get shunted off to roles that are out of the mainstream? Typically it’s because they have a psychological blind spot that is all too visible to others. Perhaps the descriptions below will remind you of some key people in your organization:

He lacks effective interpersonal skills. He’s –

Insensitive to others; viewed as too abrupt and abrasive.

Overambitious to the point that he batters people with his competitiveness; he needs to be seen as powerful.

Isolated from the team; a perfectionist who seems to do everything his own way.

Volatile under stress.

She has difficulty making tactical shifts. She is –

Mired in detail; thrown by change and innovation; too cautious; action-averse.

Unable to adapt to those who have different styles.

Conflict-averse; unable to harness conflict constructively as a creative medium for change; a poor negotiator.

Over-reliant on one skill, on natural talent, or on just raw energy.

Rigid in response to most situations; for example, blazingly decisive but without regard for overall organizational strategy.

He lacks follow-through. He –

Makes a big splash at the front end of a project, then moves on, leaving a trail of loose ends.

Leaves people hanging because of unmet promises and commitments; not fully accountable.

Her area has never really gelled. She –

Over or under-manages. She’s either over-controlling or benignly neglectful. She can’t collaborate or delegate.

Staffs in her own image; relies too much on her gut and focuses only on whether the chemistry is right.

Communicates poorly. She operates like she thinks everyone can read her mind; unwilling to speak up.

Creates mediocrity; undermines talented subordinates and/or habitually hires weak candidates.

Terminate or Turnaround?

So, what can be done with the under-performing employee? Often, the response is to terminate. But the company must then absorb the staggering costs associated with the loss of a key person. These costs include:

- Recruiting, hiring, and restart costs
- Lost training and development costs
- Cascade effect of multiple position shuffles
- Opportunity costs, disruption, down time, and lowered morale of the team
- Disputed termination litigation

Instead of terminating the employee and incurring the associated costs, there is a better solution.

Experience has shown that a well-designed and implemented turnaround program based on Executive Coaching produces more effective results. In most cases under-performance is not the result of an ability deficit. Rather, it typically results from a person's blind spots. With the proper intervention, the struggling employee can be turned around and, as a consequence, a number of benefits accrue to the organization and the individual:

- The company is spared the organizational disruption and corporate expense that inevitably occur with the termination of a key employee.
- The company is protected from the loss of the person's accumulated industry knowledge, experience, and competitive information.
- The turnaround program offers a potent management option for handling a potentially unpleasant and difficult dilemma.
- The turnaround option brings objectivity and behavioral science to bear on conflict, giving the organization and its people a greater sense of mastery and less apprehension about handling difficult human problems.

How We Do It

Specializing in human performance, Hamilton-Chase Consulting has designed a powerful Executive Coaching program that integrates our core competencies:

- Expert software systems that enhance psychological assessment
- Computerized 360° technology
- Keen diagnostic skills
- Advanced rapport-building methods
- Accelerated development strategies
- Motivating and creating true behavioral change

By integrating these performance development technologies, we assist the candidate in assembling the three essential ingredients for high performance: extensive feedback, multi-lateral motivation to make changes, and multi-source change partners for their development initiative. Together these three elements serve as the infrastructure for a Blueprint for Action, which guides the employee's achievement of measurable results.

Turnaround Program: Three Key Steps

I. Assess

- Conduct a series of life-career interviews with the candidate.
- Assess the candidate using an array of business-based computerized psychological inventories and 360° tools.
- Integrate performance management data into the assessment. Forge a consensus on the problem areas and the turnaround objectives.

II. Plan

- Deliver an in-depth, confidential debrief of all assessment findings. Identify the candidate's key strengths and areas in need of development. Highlight origins of the derailment problem.
- Clarify inner motivators for change and inner resistances to it. Harness the former and neutralize the latter.
- Synthesize findings into a Blueprint for Action
- Detail the specific behavioral changes required – precisely what does the candidate need to continue, start, and stop doing?
- Identify potential impediments that could hinder the turnaround effort – inner, interpersonal, and organizational.
- Enlist the involvement of others. Turnaround requires support from others, playing an array of roles: coach, mentor, colleague, friend, role model, protégé, advocate. Change requires change partners.
- Establish time frames and metrics, against which progress is measured.

III. Act

- Enlist one or more colleagues as change partners.
- Debrief candidate's manager and involve them in the Blueprint for Action.
- Begin action experiments during real-time, day-to-day work life, then debrief and refine with coach.
- Adopt high-impact behavioral change techniques.
- Measure progress against plan. Design simple and practical feedback loops into work routine.
- Recalibrate and refine the Blueprint for Action as needed.

Final Thoughts

When we're talking about the development of key contributors, there is one strategy that is more effective than any other:

People can change, but the most substantive and permanent change is realized when people develop from the inside out.

Consequently, the surest strategy is to begin by focusing on the inside (that is, self-awareness and self-understanding) before the outside (that is, skill-building and on-the-job development). This change strategy has proven to be a more certain way of assisting people through the process of behavior change, self-development, and performance enhancement.