

Are YOU performing as well as you could?

Firstly, how do we define the benchmarks that we should be reaching.

Are they set by you or someone else? Do you agree that they are achievable or do you struggle to meet them?

My belief has always been that the key performance indicators set by the organisation for which I have worked were always minimum standards. That is, I knew that I must reach those minimum standards each week to keep my job. Once those standards were met, I could be a little more creative about how I used my time. My beliefs came from the 1980's when I started in the recruitment industry. My first regional Manager would appear on a Friday afternoon and invite some consultants to attend work on the following Monday. Others would not be invited to attend! In those days we did not question our key performance indicators – we just made sure they were met each and every week!

I find it interesting that we all appear to be measured utilising roughly the same yardstick. For a 360° consultant (that is; those that are responsible for both sales and service) measures include:

- 5 new client visits per week
- 10 –12 new interviews
- 20 or so reference checks
- 50 – 100 telemarketing calls

And for those of you at the support end of the market – one new permanent job in and one permanent job filled per week. These measures or key performance indicators as we prefer to call them have changed little in the 20 years or so I have been in the industry. Depending on your desk and specialty, your revenue targets may range from \$15,000 to \$40,000 revenue per month (and even higher for a temp consultant). *How do you know whether you are performing as well as you could?*

For those starting out in the industry *there ain't no mountain high enough*. Trainee consultants strive to meet those measures; they want to achieve something they believe to be really important. Success for them (regardless of age) is defined in exceeding someone else's expectations of them. They make lots of mistakes but they achieve the numbers. Some of them will turn into exceptional recruiters...others will burn

out and leave the industry. That's because they are measuring themselves against benchmarks set by someone else. Managers would insist that KPI's are really the minimum standards and if you can't reach them, then you won't make it in the industry. I know of managers who take on three trainees in the hope of one "making it" past the three month probation period.

The next group sit in the land of *satisfaction*. These people have done the hard yards, think that measuring performance is a waste of time and consistently bill (but perhaps not at the level they could if they took their performance more seriously). These individuals appear to earn a comfortable living without much effort. They want to maintain the status quo and therefore become quite risk averse because they don't want to mess things up. They start to question whether what they are doing is really what they want to be doing. This group tend to be managed in two ways. Firstly the manager frightened of losing such a consistent biller will do nothing to upset the applecart. So this person becomes exempt from being measured using key performance indicators or just makes them up each week. This practice obviously upsets all those within the organisation who are being measured using key performance indicators and so creates an "us" and "them" culture.

Alternatively, their manager will push for even greater results, higher billings, more activity and normally what happens as a result is that this individual leaves taking all his/her clients with him/her to maintain the status quo somewhere else. I bet most of us know someone just like this!

The challenge for those satisfied with their performance is to maintain their course through constantly changing market conditions.

The final group *can see clearly now*. They define their own success. You reach this point when you start listening to your inner voice regarding what success actually is for you. Ironically, if these individuals work within larger agencies it is quite likely that they have been promoted into management roles and now face the challenge of motivating and measuring group one and two above. Quite often, they have branched out on their own and form the growing number of small (1 to 2 consultants)

agencies making a nice profitable living from a few choice relationships. I met such an individual recently. He has been in the industry for over 20 years, the last ten working on his own. He makes close to a million dollars a year waiting for the phone to ring! He has worked those quality relationships for all they are worth and so doesn't need to business develop. He is quite happy with his lifestyle and where his business is at. I would define this individual as "someone who can see clearly now." If this person still works for someone else, it is quite likely that they are doing their own thing within the organisation for which they work. These people are also the growing number who are joining the franchise type operations that are becoming increasingly popular within the recruitment marketplace.

So, how do you know if you are performing as well as you could? Firstly by recognising where you are in the recruitment life cycle and then by optimising your strengths. I don't think it's a bad thing to start your career being measured by stringent KPI's. For me they created great habits that have enabled me to come closer to reaching my potential in both the recruitment industry and my own business. But let's be honest, there have been periods where I have cruised along in the land of "satisfaction" for a time, then the market changed and I had to also change to stay ahead of my competition. That's the key – being honest with yourself about your performance at all times. You know before anyone tells you that you are underperforming. If you are then do something about it! ■



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