

You Get What You Inspect, Not What You Expect

Category: Compensation

As any business executive knows only too well, when managing employees you don't automatically get the behaviors you say you want. You may really believe, for instance, in the need for excellent customer service but just saying that you value it doesn't mean that your employees will act in the way you wish they would, or that they will provide the service you expect.

The problem is that you don't get behaviors just because you **expect** them. You can posture all you want and catch people doing something wrong (or, if you're an enlightened manager, catch them doing something right), but that is too casual and disorganized. It leaves too much to chance, and you almost certainly won't end up getting what you want.

The best way to let people know that something is important is to measure it and report on it. The only sure fire way to ensure that your people do what you want them to do is to **inspect** what they are doing and how that impacts the results. If you want to ensure that you consistently do get the behaviors you really want, you have to set processes and procedures in place to inspect them.

This holds true for big picture areas like values and customer service, but it has much wider applicability. One of the most frequent complaints that I hear is that processes are not followed. A new process is put in place and it is followed for a few days. Then, as soon as the manager turns away to focus on something else, the employees stop following the process and return to their old ways.

Whatever the behavior you want to encourage, just saying you want it will not make a blind bit of difference unless what you say you want is communicated and reinforced by concrete action. It is the difference between delegation and abdication.

One client of mine ran an equipment rental business, and having a neat, organized warehouse was very important to him. Just saying that it was important and that he *expected* it wouldn't have got him the level of perfection that he wanted, but he didn't feel that it was his responsibility to do the job of the warehouse manager for him. So what he did was to make a point of going back there to *inspect* it. He wasn't looking for anything in particular, but his people didn't know that and his inspections were feared by the staff. He always had the warehouse he wanted.

You have to stay focused and institute processes to ensure that procedures are being followed. It may be as simple as a checklist or as complex as a detailed review, but this is an essential step in getting people to do what you want them to do. Only if your staff knows that you are looking at what they do will they continue to do the things you want them to do.

This principle also holds true for sales compensation models – see the article [You get what you pay for, not what you say you want](#)