

## How to Manage Achievement

A few years ago a frustrated owner called me to tell me about some frustrations he was having with his top two producers. They are like poison in the office," he told me. "The only reason I let them stay here is because they pay the overhead. But over the last eighteen months their sloppiness, arrogance, and condescending attitude has caused seven recruiters to either quit because they couldn't stand being around them, didn't want to end up like them, or because they duplicated their sloppy work habits and cavalier attitude about the process and thought they could take short-cuts.

Tell me about their production over the last three years," I said to my client. My client went on to tell me that it was flat. It didn't go up, but it was still high enough to make a difference in his margins. Then they're failing," I responded. "If they don't get better, if they don't improve, then they are atrophying and they are getting behind. If your numbers stay the same you are actually falling behind because your competitors are catching up and will end up surpassing you. What you need to do is ask them if they are successful because of themselves or in spite of themselves."

(NOTE: Remember, this is all relative and is also impacted by economic circumstances. When I had this conversation with this owner, things were much better economically. If your production isn't better than last year, it also might have a lot to do with the demand for your services right now. I went on to tell my client that real success has nothing to do with the number that you end up billing, but has everything to do with doing what you are capable of doing, reaching your peak performance level. "If your recruiters are capable of billing \$400K, but bill \$300K, then they are 'successful failures.' They look successful. They make good money. But if they're not reaching their peak performance levels then they are failing.

When I was 24 years old, I was a trainer as a naval officer and taught Deming Management Methods. W. Edwards Deming was a management consultant who in post-war Japan taught Japanese manufacturing managers how to improve their processes. The concept of continuous improvement, one of the pillars of his management model, stuck with me ever since. When it comes to search, you've got to keep pressing on to press on because it doesn't matter what you billed yesterday. What only matters is how good you become and how much you improve each and every day.

Discuss these ten questions during your next training meeting as a group. The object of this exercise is to create self-awareness, to explore possible areas of improvement, and to incite action for continuous improvement with a sense of ownership by your staff. Explain that it is an exercise that is done with a sense of performance improvement and team unity, not to call anyone on the carpet for poor performance.

1. At what point in the business did you learn all components of how to put deals together? How long ago was this? (Then theoretically, since you knew all the 'basics' at that time, you should have been billing at your peak performance level).
2. If there was a maximum number that you could hit, that potential annual billing goal that you know exists deep within you, what is that number?
3. What is keeping you from hitting it?

4. How can you solve those issues? How can you leverage those issues to your advantage?
5. What are the 'excuses' that you normally tell others, or even yourself, when you do not hit your targets?
6. What really is the root issue?
7. What are three things that you could do differently over the past year if you could go back in time?
8. What are three things you are going to do differently from this day forward?
9. If applicable, what are the dates associated with achieving those items?
10. Who is going to keep you accountable? (Peer accountability is more effective than boss/subordinate accountability As Dr. Phil would say, it's time to 'get real.' Get real with yourself, your expectations, and those things you use to keep you from billing more. Try these exercises with your peers and colleagues and see how far you can go. You deserve to win.

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