MIRROR MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

There is a strong tendency for managers and supervisors to blame their employees for employee performance problems. Certainly, employees may not have the knowledge, skills, motivation, and/or aptitude to perform effectively but it would behoove managers to consider the possibility that they themselves may be contributing substantially to their employees' inadequate performance. Using the Law of Effect as the operating guideline, this paper examines the importance a manager's behavior can have on an employee's performance. The principles identified in the Law of Effect suggest that managers should examine their own behavior and proverbially look in the mirror when questioning the causes of employee behavior and what to do about it.

> "The manager directs people or misdirects them. He brings out what is in them or he stifles them. He strengthens their integrity or he corrupts them. He trains them to stand upright and strong or he deforms them. Every manager does these things when he manages—whether he knows it or not. He may do them well, or he may do them wretchedly, but he always does them".
>
> --Peter Drucker (1954)

Poor performance is a fact of life in organizations. According to Viega (1988), "If there is one universal truth about managers, it is that all of them have problem subordinates" (p. 145). There are many reasons for subordinates' inadequate performance but a major factor is supervisors' own actions. Very little is as potentially rewarding or aversive as others' actions and, like it or not, the most important factor influencing individuals' on-the-job behaviors is that of their managers (Thompson, 1978). Most people are deeply concerned with those things that will please or anger their immediate superior, and their behavior reflects this concern. To change the behavior of all employees, one merely has to employ a new manager. Candid employees might even admit that they act quite differently working for the new manager than they did for the predecessor (Daniels, 1994).

Yet, most people and, particularly, most managers seldom recognize the dramatic impact of their own actions on those of their subordinates. The same supervisors who admit they are different under a new manager still minimize, and indeed, scoff at the impact they have on those below them. We are often more readily aware of the influence other people have on us than the influence we have on others.

Given the importance of supervisory behavior on subordinate performance, supervisors would do well to practice "mirror management," i.e., before blaming employees for inadequate performance they should first look in the mirror and examine how their own behavior may have contributed to the problem situation. Do you think the supervisor in Figure 1 is aware that his behavior is a major contributor to his employees' poor performance?

How Managers Influence Employees: Antecedents and Consequences

Managers influence employee behavior in two ways: by what comes before the behavior and by what comes after it (Daniels, 1994). The technical term for what comes before a behavior is *antecedent*. The word for what comes after a behavior is *consequence* (Martin & Pear, 1999). Antecedents get us going and consequences keep us going.

Antecedents. When one tries to influence behavior before it occurs, antecedents are being used. An antecedent is a person, place, thing, event, or situation coming before a behavior that encourages one to perform that behavior (in all instances we define behavior in a general sense to include: overt actions,

thoughts, and feelings). Some of the more common antecedents used in business are goals, objectives, priorities, accountabilities, policies and procedures, standards, meetings, and rules (Daniels, 1989). Antecedents are intended to communicate what is expected of individuals. Most supervisors attempt to manage performance by telling people what to do, often in many different ways. Employees are told, asked, and cajoled to work harder, smarter, and better. Supervisors send memos or e-mails, write policies, outline procedures, conduct meetings, and develop goals and action plans, as well as establish deadlines, targets, standards, quotas, and budgets. They conduct training programs and hold classes, give monologues and have dialogues, and sometimes impart words of wisdom in eloquent, inspiring speeches while delivering impassioned pleas for increased effectiveness and efficiency.

Figure 1. Supervisory Behavior Impacts Subordinate Performance

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Yet, people all too frequently do not do as desired, otherwise they would not smoke, drink or eat excessively, use drugs, or strike their spouses. Even though managers know that workers do not do as directed, they run organizations as though performance problems can be solved by finding more and better ways of telling employees what to do. Managers do more of the same thing that isn't working or they do it more intently, when what is needed is to do something different. In other words, a quantitative change is ineffective when what is called for is a qualitative change of behavior.

Telling people what to do, in its many and varied forms, is an antecedent. Antecedents merely set the stage for behavior to occur. Even though antecedents happen before behavior, they do not maintain behavior once it has begun. Hence, antecedents have limited control over what employees actually do. The role of an antecedent is to encourage a behavior to occur initially or, at best, a few times. Effective antecedents are necessary to initiate performance, but are not sufficient to sustain performance. Figure 2 is an example of an antecedent designed and used to change driving behavior by enterprising management at the Oklahoma Department of Highways (*Daily Oklahoman*, 1998, p.1). Initially, such a unique and unexpected speed limit sign did slow traffic, but since nothing happened to drivers who exceeded the posted maximum (i.e., there were no consequences such as speeding tickets) traffic speeds soon climbed to those before the unique antecedent.

Consequences. While prompts may be useful in starting behavior, it is what comes after the action that maintains and supports performance. Thus, the second way of influencing employee performance and, by far the most effective, is through consequences that follow behavior and alter the probability of that behavior recurring. Employee behavior is a function of contingent consequences; people do as they do because of what happens to them when they do it (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1999). That is, consequences cause behavior to occur more or less often in the future. Consequences include such things as sincere verbal praise for a job well done, a monetary bonus for outstanding performance, smiles and pats on the back for excellent work, feedback about performance, jelly beans, hugs and kisses, gold stars, and in the case of the speed sign noted earlier, a patrol officer giving tickets to those individuals who exceeded the posted limit. A reprimand for coming in late for work, a demotion for poor accomplishments, and taking back gold stars for disruptive behavior are also consequences. Even doing nothing is doing something! Ignoring behavior, both positive and negative, is probably the most common example of doing nothing. Management changes behavior by its inaction as well as its action. If nothing else, doing nothing gives tacit approval of negative or undesirable actions and minimizes the importance of appropriate ones.

Figure 2. Antecedent Used to Change Driving Behavior

Note: The Outer Limit: A sign along Interstate 44 bears an unusual number designed to grab the attention of motorists and get them to slow down in a construction area. Transportation officials erected the sign Friday as an experiment to see if the unheard-of speed limit has any effect on how fast people drive through a widening project between SW 74 and SW 44. - Staff Photo by Paul Hellstern.

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Success in business is dependent on lasting, consistent performance. Yet, much management activity is heavily invested in antecedents as noted previously. As the old saying goes: "After all is said and done, more is usually said than done." Since antecedents only initiate behavior, it is painfully clear why organizations must continually repeat their messages. By looking, in a systematic way, at all significant antecedents and consequences, particularly consequences associated with a given behavior or performance, we are usually able to gain a useful perspective on why people do as they do, and develop ways to help promote, encourage, and maintain change.

The Law of Effect

The Law of Effect, formulated nearly 90 years ago (Thorndike, 1913), provides the key to influencing behavior through consequences. The vast majority of behavioral and management researchers and practitioners generally accept the validity of this law: "without a doubt the Law of Effect or principle of reinforcement must be included among the most substantiated findings of experimental psychology and is at the same time among the most useful findings for an applied psychology concerned with control of human behavior" (Vroom, 1964, p. 13). The Law of Effect states that any behavior followed by a pleasurable consequence will occur more frequently, and behavior that is followed by an aversive consequence will occur less frequently.

While not explicitly stated in the Law of Effect, it should be pointed out that a consequence is positive or negative only as interpreted by the receiver and perceiver of that consequence. Thus, supervisors must be willing to figuratively "go around the desk" and consider the situation from the viewpoints of their employees. And, each employee will tend to have a somewhat differing perspective on any given situation. Managers must be able and willing to walk in the employees' shoes and see circumstances through others' eyes. Failure to grasp employees' perspectives results in an ongoing series of misinterpretations and misunderstandings, often followed by deterioration of the relationship and even poorer performance.

Take an example with which most are familiar. You have probably witnessed a situation where a child was misbehaving on purpose, with the result that the child received some kind of reprimand or physical punishment. Afterwards, you or the other adults involved might have wondered why a child would appear to want to be punished. Meanwhile, the child may have walked away rubbing the spanked area, but thinking, "They still care enough to notice what I do." Remember that a consequence is positive or negative only as perceived by the receiver of the consequence. If love and attention are positive consequences to a child and there is not much of either being experienced, then any attention, even an admonishment, may be seen as a positive consequence by the child.

Attention can be a powerful reinforcer even if it is chastisement. There is a story from lore of the opening of a Broadway play, after which the mostly

young and inexperienced cast gathered at the local watering-hole eagerly awaiting the reviews. When they arrived, individual performers were either elated or disheartened depending on whether their performances were praised or panned. All, that is except the lone, veteran actor who received a scathing review, but who reveled in joy just like those who had been deemed stars. When asked why he was so happy with such abysmal reviews, he replied, "I'd much rather be noticed and treated harshly, even cruelly, than never noticed at all!" Failure to entertain the possibility that a person may be interpreting the administration of what most of us might consider an aversive stimulus as a positive will certainly lead to further difficulties.

Likewise, managers in an organization had a similar experience (Latham & Huber, 1992). In order to increase attendance and on-time behavior, they introduced a game in which employees could win prizes (e.g., television sets, stereos) if they came to work each day of the week on time. The procedure involved each employee drawing a playing card from a deck each day he or she came to work on time. Thus, an employee could get up to five playing cards for the work week. The worker with the highest hand won the prize. However, rather than increasing attendance this procedure led to a decrease in employee attendance and on-time behavior. What management perceived as a fun way to win valuable prizes was interpreted by many of the employees as a sinful practice. A significant number of the employees in this rural community believed that such a game was a form of gambling and they did not want anything to do with it. Once again, failure to consider how others perceive the situation led to unfortunate results. Truly, there are different strokes for different folks.

According to the Law of Effect, managers can influence employees' behaviors by controlling the consequences that follow those behaviors. Two corollaries to the Law of Effect suggest: 1) any behavior by an employee that continually recurs in the presence of the manager is being reinforced/rewarded by that manager and, 2) an employee behavior punished or ignored by a supervisor will disappear. Pretty simple stuff, right? Unfortunately, many managers foul things up by punishing good performance, rewarding bad behavior, and ignoring both good and bad, as well as the ugly.

Common Managerial Problems and Solutions

What is needed is an increased emphasis on appropriate *contingent consequences* for suitable performance. The following four scenarios illustrate what happens when managers do not use appropriate consequences or use them incorrectly, thus causing themselves to lament why their employees do not "do as they are supposed to." Note in these situations how frequently managers could have improved the situation by closely examining how their own behaviors may have contributed to employee performance problems. A look in the mirror would have been very helpful indeed.

<u>Lack of Positive Consequences for Performing</u>. In this situation the performer does something appropriate and nothing happens. Eventually, the individual stops performing. The behavior of interest is said to "extinguish."

Most managers feel that doing nothing does not affect performance (Daniels, 1994). The fact is that when managers do nothing after successful employee performance, they change that performance by decreasing the probability of its recurrence. From the perspective of the Law of Effect, doing nothing after performance decreases the probability of that action happening again. Consequently, doing nothing does something. If an employee does something good (e.g., exceeding a goal, target, or quota) and the supervisor does nothing, you can be sure that the employee's future performance will be likely to decline.

Consider the following examples. From the performer's point of view, will the indicated behavior be likely to continue?

- "I worked late last night to finish a report, but when I gave it to my boss this morning, she didn't even look at it,"
- "Six months ago I gave my supervisor a workable suggestion for improving the assembly process and saving money, as well, but I haven't heard anything from him since,"
- "Since my boss warned me about shortages, I make a special effort so my cash drawer balances each day, but my boss never notices,"
- "You work your tail off around here and no one cares."

Obviously, an absence of positive consequences or reinforcers appears to exist to the performer in each of these instances. But many managers feel getting a paycheck is sufficient reward. Unfortunately, the weekly or semi-monthly paycheck does not qualify as a reward that influences people's performance. The famous psychologist B. F. Skinner, once observed, "People don't come to work to get paid, they come to work so the pay doesn't stop" (cited in Fournies, 1988, p.33). There is a big difference between these two situations. What is implied is that there had better be reinforcers other than money from being on the job if work is going to get done on a day to day basis.

Another example occurs when people put money in a vending machine, push the button, and nothing falls into the tray. Some people try it again, but if the item fails to be delivered a second time, they will stop using that machine. Very few people continue to put money in a broken machine. Also, one's paycheck is too far removed from day to day, moment to moment job activities to be a significant influence on them.

Managers also frequently fail to respond to positive worker action, exactly the behaviors they want to see in the future. People who work the hardest and do the best are ignored because many times their supervisors are spending time and energy dealing with problem performers. All else being equal, over time, performance falls to a level necessary only to avoid punishment. The failure to reinforce productive actions is a common consequence in business, creating many performance problems.

Positive consequences or reinforcers should be delivered frequently for good performance. In choosing effective reinforcers for an individual, it is helpful to examine a list of reinforcers used by others (Potter, 1980; see Table 1).

Table 1. Reinforcers for employees in a variety of work settings (Adapted from Potter, 1980).

SPECIAL ATTENTION REINFORCERS	MONETARY REINFORCERS
Praise	Promotion
Praise in front of others	Paid days off
Special work assignments	Company stock
Reserved parking space	Company car
Choice of office	Pay for sick days not taken
Selection of own office furnishings	Pay for overtime accumulated
Invitation to higher level meetings	Tickets to special events
Choice of work attire	Free raffle or lottery tickets
Social contacts with others	Extra furnishings for office
Solicitation of opinions and ideas	Gift certificates
Choice of work partner	Dinner for family at nice restaurant
Flexible job duties	Personalized license plate
	Business cards
COMPANY TIME REINFORCERS	**PARTICIPATION REINFORCERS**
Time off for work-related activities	Voice in policy decisions
Time off for personal business	Help set standards
Extra break time	More responsibility
Extra meal time	Opportunity to learn new skill
Choice of working hours or days off	

Specific examples include:

- "I noticed you put in some extra time last night to complete this report on time; I really appreciate it,"
- "Thank you for limiting your discussion to the agenda material in today's staff meeting like I asked. Your cooperation helped the meeting go much quicker,"
- You consistently put out so much effort to make your work accurate, I thought you should have the first new computer in the department,"
- "You work hard and succeed at meeting our deadlines, I would like to take you to lunch today."

Rewards for Not Performing or for Inappropriate Behavior. Employees may not be doing expected work activities because failing to do so is rewarded. Many managers reinforce nonperformance or inappropriate behavior unconsciously on a regular basis, and do so with the best of intentions, never giving what they are doing a second thought.

We once overhead a parent telling his child that if she stopped crying he would buy her an ice cream cone. If you think about it, what is being reinforced here is stopping crying. To stop crying the child must have *started* crying. The child comes to realize on some level that when she wants ice cream she should start crying. There is a subtlety in understanding the effects of consequences. The parent is not stupid for not realizing this; he has just not fully understood how his actions have influenced his child's behavior. Consider several other business-oriented examples. Suppose an employee who does not like to work weekends

becomes disruptive during weekend shifts. If the supervisor remedies the problem by taking the employee off weekend work, the supervisor has shown the employee (and other employees) that the way to get what is wanted to be disruptive. This supervisor has unwittingly rewarded poor performance.

In a more subtle situation an employee was known to be self-deprecating and the manager wanted to eliminate this behavior. The employee frequently used such phrases as, "I can't do that as well as you," "I sure am bad when it comes to adding figures," or "I bombed that one." The manager, thinking it appropriate to build the employee's self-esteem, typically responded, "No you didn't, Pat". "That was a fine job". "I thought you handled it very well."

Why is the employee self-deprecating? Because people, especially her manager, reward that behavior. Again, we get what we reinforce. The manager has followed his subordinate's self-deprecating response with a reinforcer (verbal praise: "I thought you handled it well."), thereby increasing the probability that the subordinate will engage in similar unwanted behavior in the future. Indeed, the manager has probably decreased the subordinate's self-confidence and increased her dependency on others. A more effective response would be silence, or merely ignoring the response and addressing a different topic. This alternative, by failing to acknowledge (reinforce) the unwanted behavior, would decrease the probability of its recurrence. The subordinate would soon stop making self-deprecating responses (at least to the manager) if one were to stop reassuring (reinforcing) her.

Yes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. A manager can destroy a subordinate's confidence by giving her reassurance and concern when she is self-deprecating. A valid objection might be raised that people need reassurance and concern when their behavior indicates they are frightened, upset, or lacking in confidence. It is our belief that it is not concern that is important, but rather, when concern is shown. To follow self-deprecatory behavior with a show of concern is to reinforce and increase the probability of this response. It is better to tell the person they handled a situation well and did a fine job after they actually performed well.

Other examples when supervisors inadvertently reinforce poor performance or inappropriate behavior include:

- When employees make errors, the boss corrects the mistakes,
- Employees who do difficult tasks poorly are given easy tasks to perform,
- Employees who are difficult to control receive job assignments giving them a lot of freedom,
- Employees who repeatedly complain to the boss about certain work assignments are not given such assignment in the future,
- Employees who perform poorly receive a lot of attention from the boss who behaves as a therapist over coffee or lunch, which the boss purchases,
- A department manager recommends bad employees for promotion, rather than good ones, because the manager cannot run the department without the good performers,

- The employee who has a problem with an assignment (or does not want to do it) goes to the supervisor, asks for help, and leaves the problem and the assignment on the supervisor's desk for him or her to resolve and complete,
- The manager who has bad performers gives them raises to motivate them to perform better.

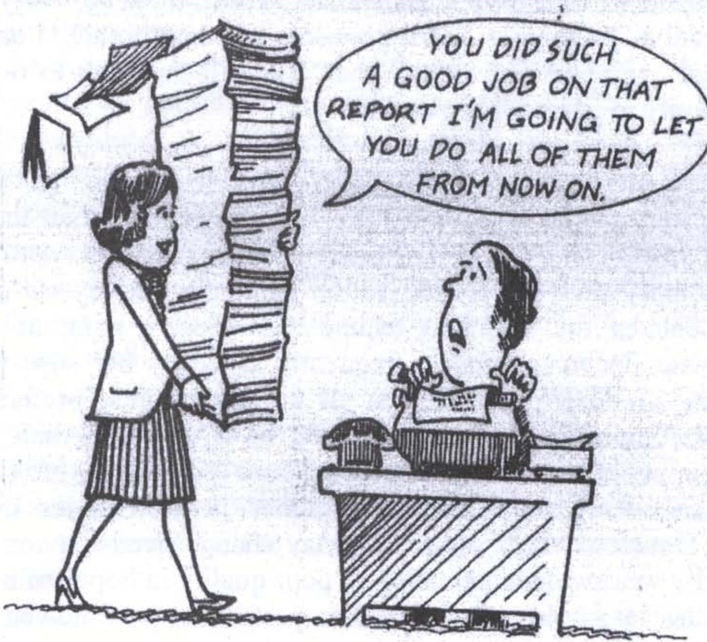
What do you think the consequence will be in each of these examples? What will co-workers learn from observing these situations? It may be easy to see what is happening when put on paper, but it is not that clear on-the-job or so many would not be guilty of such actions. To correct this problem, provide payoffs only when workers perform as desired. People respond to consequences whether they are aware of them or not. Do not reward employees for nonperformance. Managers need to stop buying coffee and lunch for substandard performers, even if it is only meant to provide time to discuss the problem. Do not play amateur psychologist; keep discussions relative to performance, i.e. what the employee actually does or does not do. When employees make errors, they should be required to correct their errors. Assist as necessary, but do not correct the errors or do the job for them even if it is easier for you at the time. If we start we shall always be the one to do so. When employees complain repeatedly about work that is fairly assigned and unavoidable, ignore the complaints. Give verbal rewards, however, when the work assignment is performed correctly. Be wary of reverse delegation. Managers and supervisors are there to assist employees, but make sure that everyone understands that it is still their job to do, problem to solve, opportunity to grasp, or responsibility.

***Punishment for Doing What is Expected*.** Research on the Law of Effect shows that people tend to behave less frequently when the behavior is followed by punishment. The most common reason people do not do as they are expected is simply that the desired action from the employee's perspective is punished. Consider the following example: Suppose a computer programmer who writes clear documentation is frequently asked by her supervisor to write documentation for other programmers. If the programmer prefers doing other tasks (e.g., writing programs), being asked to write more than her share of documentation would be an aversive consequence (punishment) to doing this task well. This is especially true if other programmers get to write less documentation as a result. Therefore, the programmer may change her behavior to avoid this consequence by writing documentation of poor quality in hopes of being assigned less of it. Other examples of appropriate performances followed by common organizational punishments include:

- The employee who does difficult work well is assigned all of the difficult work,
- The employee who makes excellent suggestions at meetings gets assigned extra work to carry out the suggestions,
- The manager who does a good job and comes in under budget gets his or her budget cut, while the person who is over budget gets the same amount or perhaps even an increase the following year,

- The employee who tries to be innovative hears the boss yell, "Why can't you follow instructions like everyone else?",
- The employee who comes early and stays late is labeled an "eager beaver" or "brown-nose" and is further ridiculed,
- The employee observed cleaning up their work area is told by the boss that s/he is finally doing work that fits them and told to also clean up the bosses' office,
- The boss always waits for latecomers to arrive before commencing meetings or repeats missed information, effectively punishing those who arrive on time,
- An employee who finishes a task early, is told to help other employees who had not finished their work (some of whom were most certainly wasting time waiting for this to happen),
- An employee is told, "You did such a good job on that report I'm going to let you do all of them from now on." Figure 3 shows how this happens.

Figure 3. No Good Deed Goes Unpunished



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The adage, "No good deed goes unpunished," reflects the attitude among employees in many organizations that the likely result of appropriate action is negative consequences for those who do them. Based on these examples, the conclusion can be drawn that people will fail to do appropriate things to avoid anticipated punishers. If punishment continues in these situations, employees will further avoid doing what is wanted. Punishment must be replaced with what employees perceive as rewards.

No Negative Consequences for Poor Performance. Supervisors many times do not ask certain employees to submit reports because the employees refuse to write reports, complete them late, or poorly. When an employee complains and protests that he or she is given a special project, some supervisors avoid giving that employee special projects in the future because they feel it is not worth the hassle. Some supervisors initiate disciplinary action with an employee who refuses to perform only to get pressure from higher management, the human resources department, or the union representative suggesting that the supervisor is being hard-nosed or vindictive, thus forcing the supervisor to back off. Other supervisors feel that affirmative action requirements keep them from doing anything negative to poor performing minorities, females, those over 39 years-old, and other "protected" groups. Some supervisors give average or even above average performance ratings to below average workers because they refuse to be the ones to put a black mark in employees' records. These examples depict workers who are not performing, in part, because there are no negative consequences to them for inadequate performance. In such situations employees believe, and rightfully so, that their performance does not really matter or affect their lives.

These deplorable situations require that supervisors provide negative consequences for poor performance. Fournies (1988) suggests some things that should be done:

When Employees…	Then…
• having a desirable work location willfully performs badly	assign a less desirable location,
• willfully perform badly and do not improve their performance	demotion may be an appropriate step in a progressive disciplinary system,
• are demoted because of poor performance	reduce salary and popular perks,
• perform badly	deny or delay raises and perks until performance improves,
• are willfully not improving Performance and coaching and other interventions fail to produce change.	terminate the employee.

The suggestion here is not to continually threaten and punish employees since that is what poor managers do, which does not work. Yet, when

management's best positive efforts prove insufficient, there must be negative consequences for problem employees for continued nonperformance, not just more reinforcement or failure to act.

As an important cautionary note, it should be understood that the rules leading to both positive and negative consequences must be clearly defined, disseminated in advance, and consistently administered in order to predictably influence employee behaviors. This means that rules and consequences of behaviors have to be ones that really count and that we are genuinely willing to enforce on a day-to-day basis, month after month with all employees. To do otherwise shows that the rules really do not count or do so only at certain times for some people. If this system fails to influence behaviors in the desired manner it is nearly always because managers fail to keep their ends of the bargain, becoming lax in administering rewards and punishers.

Finally, there are two considerations that should be mentioned that impact the effect of consequences: immediacy and frequency. Consequences are subject to impact erosion. This means the shelf life of a consequence is limited. The more immediate the consequence, the more effective it is in changing behavior. Waiting to praise or reprimand an employee for a specific behavior at their semi-annual performance review, for example, will have a marginal impact on performance. Likewise, there is limited impact on performance of a single consequence: "One positive reinforcer will not change your life" (Daniels, 1994, p. 70), or anyone's life. An occasional reinforcer at work will make only a small difference in performance. That is why *yearly* performance appraisals, *annual* recognition dinners, *quarterly* bonuses, and employee of the *month* contests with their low frequency of reinforcement have little or no impact on organizational performance. To provide a perspective on the importance of frequency, in *The Technology of Teaching*, B. F. Skinner states that it may take as many as 50,000 reinforcers to teach competence in basic math—roughly the first four grades (Skinner, 1968).

Organizational Errors with Respect to Consequences

While the major focus of this paper is on individual managers and supervisors, it should be noted that *organizations* should also periodically look in the mirror to examine the consequences they deliver. This is because organizations often have reward systems that are inappropriate in that the types of behaviors rewarded are those which need to be discouraged, while desired behaviors are not being rewarded at all. In his classic article entitled "On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B," Kerr (1975) provides numerous examples of reinforcement mistakes organizations make. For example, universities hope that professors will not neglect their teaching responsibilities but reward them entirely for research, publications, and grant writing. Rewards for good teaching are usually limited to outstanding teacher awards, which are given to only a small percentage of good teachers and usually bestow little money and fleeting prestige. Punishments for poor teaching are also rare. Rewards for research and publications, on the other hand, and punishments for failure to accomplish these, are common. Furthermore, publication-oriented resumes

usually are well-received at other universities, whereas teaching credentials, harder to document and quantify, are much less transferable. Consequently, it is understandable for university professors to concentrate on research, even to the detriment of teaching and at the expense of their students. How could this happen? An updated version of Kerr's article offers the answer: "It's the reward system, stupid!" (Kerr, 1995, p. 7). Just as every good cop and investigative reporter will tell you that to solve a mystery, one must "follow the money" (Sorkin & Buyer, 1995, p. 42), we advise organizations to "follow the consequences" because "You get what you reinforce" (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1999) and don't get what you punish or ignore. Table 2 provides other typical organizational mistakes in terms of inconsistencies between what organizations hope for and say and what they reward or do:

Table 2. Common Organizational Reward Blunders

Organizations hope for…	*…yet often reinforce…*
Long-term growth; environmental responsibility	Short-term quarterly growth and earnings
Teamwork	Individual effort
Setting challenging "stretch" objectives	Achieving goals; "making the numbers"
Downsizing; rightsizing; delayering; restructuring	Adding staff; adding budget; adding job evaluation points to get increase
Total quality commitment	Shipping on schedule, even with defects
Candor; surfacing bad news early	Reporting good news, whether it's true or not; agreeing with the boss, whether or not s/he's right
Pay for performance	Pay for seniority

In Conclusion

Although supervisors in the past have relied on quick fixes and whatever management techniques were currently in vogue, the need for long-term behavior management is sorely needed. Utilizing the simple principles embodied in the Law of Effect, managers and supervisors can better understand why some employees do not perform as expected while others do.

An important first step is for managers to invest the necessary time and energy to "look in the mirror" and reflect upon which employee behaviors they are rewarding and punishing. Too often, managers respond to an immediate crisis or a personal problem without considering the long-term impact of their actions. As a result, problems develop in which productive employees are either ignored or punished while less productive employees are rewarded.

The Law of Effect suggests that if a behavior is followed by a pleasant experience, then the person will probably repeat the behavior. If the behavior is followed by an unpleasant experience or by no response at all, then the person is

less likely to repeat it. Consequently, employees who perform according to management's expectations should receive immediate and frequent rewards thus positively reinforcing the appropriate behavior that has been performed. Employees who do not perform according to expectations should receive unpleasant consequences for their inappropriate behavior. Not only will this arrangement result in desirable behavior in the individual employee, it will also help to create a culture in which it is clearly understood that high performing, productive employees will receive desirable rewards.

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