



Ensure other people excel when you aren't watching them

By Andy Bounds

I wonder if Motorway Policemen think motorists always slam their brakes on? After all, that is what they'll see whenever they approach someone.

Actually, they'll probably see something else as well: when they've passed the motorist and look in the rear view mirror, they'll see them speed up again. It sure is easy to do the right thing when someone's watching you, isn't it? We see this all the time, in all sorts of situations:

- Motorists and policemen
- Fast food companies and media pressure
- Children and parents
- You and your boss
- Your team and you

Influencing others so they self-police is therefore essential. After all, if you don't, they'll only be brilliant when you're watching. But this doesn't automatically happen. It often needs a lot of thought, input and effort on your part. Here are three ways to help you to help your team to self-police.

#1 Communicate based on their wants, not needs

I'm bald. I need a wig. But I don't want one. So I'm not buying one. People are motivated by what they want, not need. So saying "I need you to turn up to meetings on time/hit your targets/work late tonight" only works brilliantly if they want to do it. But if they don't, you're unlikely to get the

same level of enthusiastic discretionary effort.

So help them want to do it. This involves having a chat with them, containing four elements:

- Ask them what they want to achieve from their jobs (e.g. kudos, promotion opportunities, to leave on time to see the children etc.)
- Work together to identify how they will get more of these wants by doing the things you need them to
- Agree actions and habits (see #2 below)
- Agree how often you'll speak (#3)

#2 Agree actions and habits

Many (most?) communications don't end with an action. Instead it's...

"Understand? Yes? Excellent. Bye".

So, ensure they're crystal clear what their actions and deadlines are.

But, actions alone aren't always enough. Sometimes, you're after a habit change. For example, someone turning up to meetings on time, not late. This action is recurring, not a one-off.

So work together to identify ways they can remind themselves to self-police. For example: stop having back-to-back meetings, insert recurring diary entries reminding them, briefing their PA to remind them, agreeing that you will remind them every time they forget, and so on).

#3 Meet regularly

If a motorist wants to stick to the speed limit on a long journey, one option is to ask a police car to drive next to them all the way. This clearly isn't feasible. But neither is having no police car at all. They know they can't help themselves and speed up if nobody's watching.

Similarly, agree regular interventions between them and you. This could be often/formal weekly meetings, or infrequent/informal monthly chats. As with everything else, the ideal is that they self-police it, rather than you reminding them to meet with you.

One other way to use this Tip

This Tip is focussed on you being the policeman, helping the motorist drive well when you aren't there.

You can also use the same advice if you are the motorist. Ask your boss to do #1, #2 and #3. This could be useful if you don't enjoy/feel passionate about your job. In fact, doing so might be the best thing you ever did – both for you and them.

Action points

1. Think whether you want to be a better policeman (leader), motorist (direct report) or both
2. Identify who will be the best person(s) to speak with, to discuss #1-#3 above
3. Go do it

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About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success. Marketing legend Drayton Bird said Andy had taught him '... more about effective communicating than a lady who'd taught two American Presidents'.

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