

Bob Behn's Performance Leadership Report

An occasional (and maybe even insightful) examination of the issues, dilemmas, challenges, and opportunities for improving performance and producing real results in public agencies.



Sixteen Causal Behaviors Underlying The PerformanceStat Leadership Strategy

"We can know more than we can tell."
Michael Polanyi

The Cause-and-Effect Question: What is the *Implicit Theory of PerformanceStat*?

What might be the *cause-and-effect leadership behaviors* that connect specific aspects of a PerformanceStat strategy to the improvements in performance that the chief executive is seeking to achieve?

The Many Possible Cause-and-Effect Behaviors of PerformanceStat

There are at least sixteen different *causal behaviors* that can link the actions of an organization's chief executive and his or her leadership team to the results they seek to achieve. The first four dramatize the purposes to be pursued, specify the results to be produced, convey the improvements to be made, and highlight the performance that needs to be enhanced. The other twelve motivate individuals, teams, and agencies to make these improvements.

Behavior 1: Reiterating the purpose can keep everyone focused on the big picture.

By repeating and repeating the public purpose that the organization is responsible for achieving, the leadership team can ensure that, in their pursuit of detailed tasks and specific targets, people do not forget their overarching mission.

Behavior 2: Analyzing data can reveal significant performance deficits.

By analyzing very current performance data, the leadership team can discern and highlight the performance deficits that the organization needs to eliminate or mitigate.

Behavior 3: Creating targets can specify exactly what needs to be accomplished by when.

By evolving, in consultation with subunit managers, specific, challenging, consequential performance targets for each subunit to achieve, the leadership team can not only identify the results to be produced but also motivate agencies, individuals, and teams to produce them.

Behavior 4: Making operational assignments can define who needs to fix which performance deficits next.

By developing an ongoing series of operational tasks that are directly linked to the organization's purpose and its targets, the leadership team can focus the efforts of subunit managers and front-line employees on the next steps for eliminating or mitigating specific performance deficits.

Behavior 5: Devoting resources and time to PerformanceStat can dramatize the chief executive's personal commitment to improving performance.

By investing significant resources in an analytic staff and assigning these individuals and other members of his or her leadership team to spend significant time on PerformanceStat, a chief executive can demonstrate a serious, personal commitment to improving performance.

Behavior 6: Conducting meetings can focus everyone's attention on what is most important.

By conducting an ongoing series of regular, frequent, integrated meetings, the leadership team can keep everyone focused both on their important macro purposes and on the essential actions and activities necessary to achieve these purposes.

Behavior 7: Requesting reports on progress can ensure that targets and assignments are taken seriously.

By asking subunit managers to report regularly in a quasi-public meeting on the status of their assignments, on their progress towards achieving their performance targets, on their strategies for overcoming their performance deficits, the leadership team can remind everyone that these responsibilities are important.

Behavior 8: Asking questions of individual subunit managers can promote personal responsibility.

By directly questioning subunit managers and their subordinates about their unit's progress, the leadership team can establish in these individuals a sense of personal responsibility for completing their assignments, achieving their targets, and improving performance.

Behavior 9: Following up frequently on targets and assignments can create the feedback that can suggest adjustments.

By following up regularly on targets and assignments, the leadership team can generate feedback that compares progress with objectives and thus reveals whether the current approach needs to be modified or revamped and, perhaps, what kind of changes might produce better results.

Behavior 10: Distributing comparative data widely can help every team appraise, without delusions, its own performance.

By distributing data that compares the results produced by subunits with identical or similar responsibilities, the leadership team can ensure that each subunit has an honest, realistic appreciation of how its performance compares with that of its peers.

Behavior 11: Scrutinizing the positive deviants can facilitate everyone's learning.

By identifying those subunits that are achieving significant success and by analyzing and explaining the causes of their achievements, the leadership team can help other subunits learn how they too can improve performance.

Behavior 12: Recognizing accomplishments publicly can confirm that success is possible and valued.

By publicly and effusively recognizing meaningful accomplishments with intrinsic rewards for subunits, their employees, and their managers, the leadership team can demonstrate that significant successes can be achieved and are valued.

Behavior 13: Reproving the recalcitrant can get everyone's attention.

By regularly questioning subunit managers about their lack of analytical insight, operational effectiveness, or strategic coherence, the leadership team can ensure that everyone in the organization understands that ineffectiveness (as well as indifference, incompetence, and insubordination) are unacceptable.

Behavior 14: Telling stories can foster a results-focused culture.

By frequently telling stories about employees whose exemplary work significantly improved performance (and occasionally about the incompetent or indolent who undermine these efforts), the leadership team can validate the meaning underlying everyone's work and foster a results-focused culture.

Behavior 15: Abetting everyone's implicit evaluation of everyone else can breed individual and team motivation.

By creating an environment in which everyone present at the PerformanceStat meetings will implicitly (and perhaps explicitly) evaluate everyone else who is present, the leadership team can motivate agencies, individuals, and teams to achieve their targets and engage in results-focused behavior.

Behavior 16: Remaining persistent can prove that this isn't going away.

By making PerformanceStat a formal part of organizational life and assiduously adhering to the practices that they have established, the leadership team can demonstrate that their performance strategy is neither superfluous nor ephemeral.