

tools of the trade

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Analyzing Performance Problems *Analyzing Performance Problems. Robert F. Mager and Peter Pipe. Belmont, California: Fearon Publishers, Inc. 111 pp. 1970. \$5.95 (paper).*

If volunteers aren't doing what we want them to do, we set up a training program. If 4-H youth aren't doing what we want them to, we hold a training meeting. If Extension agents aren't doing the job they're supposed to do, a training program is developed.

Any training program should answer one essential question: Could the volunteer, or Extension agent, or the 4-H member do the job (the way we want it done) if their life depended on it? One way to get a valid answer to this question would be to offer a \$10 reward for the "correct" performance. If they can pick up the \$10, they know how to do the job and "teaching" them what they already know is a waste of time.

In a dandy little book, *Analyzing Performance Problems*, Mager and Pipe come up with some novel ideas about training, which is changing people, and job engineering, which is changing the job.

First, they ask that you describe the difference between what's being done and what should be done. Then they ask another question that's often ignored: Is this difference important? Change costs time, money, and other resources. If the change doesn't *really* matter, then your best option is to ignore it.

If the discrepancy is important, your next step is to determine if this is a learning deficiency. Could they pick up your 10 bucks? If this is truly a learning deficiency, then training is an effective and proper procedure.

But if you lose your 10 because they already know how to

to perform, then you still have a problem—but it's *not* a training problem and will *not* be solved by a training program, no matter how well designed and conducted.

Mager and Pipe then supply you with four questions that lead to changing the job rather than changing the people:

“Is proper performance punishing?”

“Does performance matter?”

“Is non-performance rewarding?”

“Are there barriers to proper performance?”

Simple questions, but how often do we look at *our* requests to volunteers, club members, and Extension staff to try to determine if filling our requests is actually punishing the other person? Paperwork may be punishing to some, long-term time commitments punishing to others. We need to look at the tasks we ask others to perform and determine what parts of these tasks are punishing to the member, volunteer, or Extension staff and try to remove the distasteful parts of the job.

Of course performance matters—to us. But, to the other person are there many tangible results from doing the job the way we want it done? People want their actions to count. They don't like working hard without seeing something happen. We, in Extension, need to let the people we work with know what happens as a result of their efforts.

Sometimes, unknowingly, we reward improper performance. You get to a meeting on time and wait 15 minutes for the meeting to start. You get to the meeting 15 minutes late and the meeting starts when you get there.

Finally, are there things, or people, that keep people from doing their job properly? Is there a lack of support, such as proper meeting places, equipment, or supplies that prevent people from doing the job properly?

I hope this review will spur you to *get* the book, *read* it, and then *use* it to analyze performance problems in your Cooperative Extension program area. It's a short, fun, easy-reading, power-packed volume.