

Profile Strategies

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Employer's Advantage

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From Jim Sirbasku's Desk

Our Gift to You: Defining the Performance PREview

As we wind up 2008 and shop for just the right last-minute gifts for our loved ones, our desire might be to push away thoughts of dire economic news and not worry right now about what will happen next year and beyond.

But we cannot ignore business news for long and survive. Well-run organizations must look unflinchingly at the future and plan for it the best they can. The times demand regular adaptation and adjustment to survive.

So here are two thoughts for leaders to take into the new year:

- To survive, the very best workers available need to be running our organizations.
- We need to spell out for ourselves and our workers what the future will look like.

At Profiles, we have begun a campaign we believe stresses these ideas. We are asking managers to think of employee performance in terms of describing what they want to see instead of looking back on failures. This concept is behind the slogan "replace performance reviews with performance PREviews." You may be asking just what we mean by preview, and how in the world an organization is supposed to

get rid of performance reviews. What we mean is that organizations:

- should not be looking back, but forward;
- an employee's performance must always be noted but in a way that achieves something positive for the organization;
- surviving and thriving organizations must recognize that employees will always be the heart of business.

Often when leaders and planners talk about getting rid of the performance review, their colleagues feel threatened and wonder whether they will be forbidden from noting behavior that does not benefit the organization. Indeed, some even think they won't be able to terminate poorly performing employees.

Let's try to put those misconceptions to rest. Performance previews, with emphasis, on the pre, are designed to get the manager to talk about what he or she wants to see. They are a crystal-ball look into the future, if you will. They are important because talking about what we would like to see happen offers a more constructive approach than discussing what has already happened that we disliked. Describing what we want requires us to discuss ideas, not just behavior.

Ideally, this look into the future must occur before poor performance happens, and the discussion of ideas requires the participation of both manager and employee. This behavior also occurs regularly – unlike the performance review, which occurs annually (if even then).

The concept is not a new one for forward-thinking organizations that want to retain high-performing workers and rely on a collaborative model, thrive on teamwork and know that one person cannot stoke a powerful engine. Forward thinking organizations are ahead of the game. They focus on coaching and forming teams that work together synergistically instead of relying on top-down directing to build, at best, mediocre teams.

Using our crystal ball, let us imagine how such a preview would unfold:

(continued)

Manager: *Melinda, let's talk about how to handle the new client. They are a company with a reputation moving fast, and the management team expects attention to detail as well as great ideas. What are your thoughts on getting started?*

Melinda: *I'd like to put Josh and Carol on the project. Carol has great big-picture ideas, and so does Josh. But he is strong on the details, too, and I will need him to double-check me as I plan the rollout.*

Manager: *Yes – all of you worked well together on the project you just finished. I wonder if you would also consider bringing in Katy on the financials. She has strengths that we need. And let me have a look at the proposal, too, at regular intervals. I need to build up the team as much as possible. What else do we need to talk about before we get started?*

Melinda: *You know that juggling multiple projects might get in the way of meeting deadlines. Could we set some priorities and plan our deadlines from back to front so that we can break this project into pieces?*

Do you see how a forward-looking approach that requires contributions by both the manager and Melinda can get this project off on the right foot? Meanwhile, the manager is spelling out exactly what behavior this project requires while asking Melinda for her thoughts. For the relationship and the company, this is much more productive than rehashing what did not work six months ago.

Of course, it's also useful to bring in what you would like to see in the future in terms of what did not happen last time. Imagine the manager above Melinda asking how she should have avoided the issue of the final product being completely opposite of what the client wanted. That would not be nearly as effective as having Melinda might create a draft six weeks before the final deadline to make sure everyone is on the right track.

The point is to direct behavior and actions by visualizing what you want to see, and it's more effective than haranguing an employee about what went wrong. If the manager had told Melinda that her team had botched a project six months ago and that such errors could not happen again, what would the outcome have been? We can all imagine a number of scenarios. Perhaps we can envision Melinda's furrowed brow as she tries to remember the project, exactly how it was botched, and wonders why the matter did not come up at the time. Then we can imagine her disappointment at her paltry raise, which probably was not dictated by her performance anyway. Finally, we can imagine her walking out the door to a new job a few weeks later.

Unfortunately, all of those scenarios are byproducts of a system which relies on an annual review where one person holds all the power and the other says what he or she thinks she is supposed to in order to get a raise or a pat on the back.

This concept of the performance preview is not new at Profiles. We have focused on this topic often in different ways; it includes all the caveats that bear repeating here: one size does not fit all where employees are concerned; coaching, not directing, is the most productive way of obtaining the work performance your organization requires; job fit is crucial to good performance; the annual performance review is an ineffective, one-sided game with one person holding all the marbles.

Think of the preview as two minds – the employee's and manager's – working in sync. Think of this as our last-minute gift to you in 2008. Think of it as the gift that will keep on giving on 2009 and beyond.



*Jim Sirbasku, CEO
Profiles International*

"Start with what they know. Build with what they have. The best of leaders when the job is done, when the task is accomplished, the people will say we have done it ourselves." – Lao Tzu, philosopher

PRODUCT FOCUS: Gifts with Year-Round Staying Power

Giving the perfect seasonal gift to your organization (and to yourself!) is easy and fun if you shop at Profiles. We offer a number of products that are designed to fit anyone's needs as well as some products that can be tailored to meet your specific needs. We can help improve your bottom line, and fit any budget; we do not wear out and are never in short supply. Are you ready to shop?

Check out this list to warm you up.

First, try out the well-liked **ProfileXT®**. Busy shoppers have found a variety of uses for it: selection, coaching, training, promotion, managing, and succession planning. This powerful tool offers up-to-date technology to help place the right people in the right jobs. For turbo-charged coaching efforts, PXT's Coaching Report is the best. Because it focuses on employee development, shoppers get the added benefits of reduced turnover and increased productivity. The technologically advanced ProfileXT allows managers to see the total person, including reasoning styles, occupational interests and behavioral traits.

Next, let's visit the **ProfileXTSales™** department. If superior salespeople are on your list, PXTS will help you select, train and coach them. With this gift, you are laying the foundation for your high-performance sales team. What could be more suitable?

Wrap **CheckPoint360°™** in a big red bow. It gives your managers the opportunity to see an evaluation of their job performance from everyone, including immediate supervisors, peers and direct reports. This assessment can fortify our perceptions about our strengths and offer insight into the areas we need to improve. No one can afford to be without it in this season when optimum management performance is mandatory.

Add on the **CheckPoint SkillBuilder™ Series**. This system helps the good get better and the best stay at the top by emphasizing key characteristics of listening, processing information, effective communication, relationship building, thinking creatively, helping teams work together, and so much more.

Try **Profiles Performance Indicator™** to better understand different people and how to motivate each employee successfully. There is no time for conflicts that stand in the way of smooth workflow. PPI is crucial in getting everyone beyond disagreement to focus on the real work.

Profiles Team Analysis™, compiled from data collected through the Profiles Performance Indicator™, makes team building both challenging and rewarding. Think of creating a team as more than putting together a group of people and hoping everyone sees what needs to be done. This system highlights the attributes of each team member, reveals group strengths, and alerts the leader to potential problems. The information helps eliminate conflict, build cooperation, improve communication, and assure the team achieves the desired results.

No gift list is complete without **Profiles WorkForce Compatibility™**. PWC's strength lies in measuring important skills and providing understanding of them. It helps define the relationship between an employee and manager in areas of self-assurance, self-reliance, conformity, optimism, decisiveness, objectivity and approach to learning. PWC helps both manager and employee to communicate better, spot conflicts before they occur, and successfully resolve problems as they occur.

With these gift suggestions, shopping for the difficult person on your list might just become a pleasure. Treat yourself to a morale boosting and profit building gift today!

Call Profiles International at (254) 751-1644 and celebrate the holidays all year long.

"The art of choosing men is not nearly so difficult as the art of enabling those one has chosen to attain their full worth." – Napoleon Bonaparte, French military and political leader

POP QUIZ: What's Your Coaching I.Q.? Organizations are increasingly turning to coaching to get them through difficult economic times, or to maintain managerial strength and grow as a company. This test will help you reflect on your beliefs about coaching. At the end you will find answers and a scorecard.

1. What is an important first step for a coach to take with an employee?

- a. Direct the actions that need to happen.
- b. Encourage the client or employee to rely on the coach.
- c. Ask questions that provoke thoughtful answers.
- d. Listen well.
- e. Both a and d.
- f. Both c and d.
- g. Both a and b.

2. What is the major difference between coaches and mentors?

- a. The coach focuses on the job, and the mentor on the person.
- b. The mentor is usually an older friend, and the coach is a boss.
- c. The mentor is wealthy.
- d. The mentor is often a business partner; the coach is never a partner.

3. Who needs a coach?

- a. The coach.
- b. Direct reports.
- c. Peers
- d. All of the Above.

4. What should I look for in a coach?

- a. Certification.
- b. Questioning and listening skills.
- c. Vast experience in the area I want to excel.
- d. Terseness.

5. Only the top echelons of management need coaches.

- True
- False

6. The reasons people give for not needing or wanting coaches include:

- a. They don't have time to commit to coaching.
- b. They have read management books and know what to do on the job.
- c. Coaches are meddlers.
- d. All of the above.

7. The need for coaching can be traced to:

- a. Organizations' increasing focus on collaborative management.
- b. Brain drain as Baby Boomers retire.
- c. Challenges presented by several different generations working side-by-side.
- d. All of the above.

8. In the coaching relationship, who is the expert at deciding what is best for the coachee?

- a. The coachee.
- b. The coach.
- c. The coachee's boss.
- d. The coachee's peers and direct reports.

9. What key things does a coach do to build trust?

- a. Promise the coachee a raise and/or a promotion in a year's time.
- b. Help the coachee to focus on issues.
- c. Point out the bad behavior of the coachee's peers.
- d. Counsel the coachee against risk-taking.

10. Why do organizations need coaches?

- a. To help improve productivity.
- b. To help people navigate organizational changes.
- c. To aid new managers in job transitions, often to promotions.
- d. All of the above

ANSWERS:

- 1. f
- 2. a (although options may differ)
- 3. d
- 4. b
- 5. B
- 6. D
- 7. D
- 8. A
- 9. B
- 10. D

Key:

1-3 correct: Work a bit more on your attitude.
4-7 correct: Growth is your biggest need. You could use a coach!

8-10 correct: Brava! You're the organization's dream!

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

– Harold R. McAlindon, author

SUCCESS STORY: PXT Helps Controlco Grow Successful Employees

Editor's Note: Controlco, headquartered in California, distributes automation systems for a broad spectrum of industrial and commercial clients. Customers get state-of-the-art products and services that provide a turnkey solution. For half a century, the company has provided hundreds of clients with controls, instrumentation, and software to suit their needs. Here, Bridget Turner discusses how the company's use of ProfileXT® has helped on different levels.

Q. Why did Controlco decide to use ProfileXT?

A. We wanted to identify behaviors that lead to success on the job. Using a "Can they do the job? Will they do the job? Will they love the job?" thought process, we have been able to pinpoint these behaviors and we are able to recognize more consistently how a candidate will fit in a particular job.

Q. You have used assessments before. How does ProfileXT give you different results?

A. We have always used a profile for hiring purposes, but the assessments we've used in the past pale in comparison with the level of intelligence we get when reading a candidate's Profile XT.

Q. Does Controlco use PXT for both job candidates and existing workers?

A. Yes. We use it for our potential employees, and almost all of our existing employees have taken the Profile XT as well.

Q. How has this expanded use helped your organization?

A. We have been able to better understand our employees and why they do some of the things they do. In some cases, ProfileXT informs us about what holds employees back from top performance. Also, we are able to address coaching areas from a much more informed perspective and believe that by using the Coaching Report, our efforts will be more effective in helping our employees grow and improve.

Q. What would you tell other managers about ProfileXT?

A. We still have a lot to learn about its benefits, but we have already seen its power at work in our hiring practices and have learned more about ourselves and our employees than we ever anticipated.

Q. What would you tell other organizations about Profiles as a company?

A. Our partnership with Profiles has helped us make smarter hiring decisions and helped develop existing staff, resulting in more business success. Since partnering with Profiles International earlier this year, Controlco has learned a great deal about hiring practices, understanding people and building a business for success.

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"You must look into other people as well as at them." – Lord Chesterfield, British statesman