

WORLD CLASS ADVICE ON MANAGING AND MOTIVATING PEOPLE

By

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Every manager wants motivated employees. Every CEO dreams of an organization where people perform full tilt to the company's and customer's benefit day in and day out. But, for most organizations it is just a dream. The reality is that most employees in most organizations most of the time perform at less than 110 percent. We try incentives. We try rewards. We try yelling. Nothing seems to work well or for long. Managing and motivating people is hard. If we only had a model to follow. If only there was a process we could follow to get the best from people who report to us. If only there was a theory about motivation that made sense and worked. Well, there is one. It was offered by a professor of psychology in 1978 in a book entitled *Human Competence: Engineering Worthy Performance*. The author was Thomas F. Gilbert. We recommend his work to you. It is one of the best books ever written on managing and motivating people. In this paper we offer a brief summary of some of Gilbert's key concepts.

One of Gilbert's most important contributions was to offer what he called a "Behavioral Engineering Model" as a basis for understanding human competence in organizations. His model goes like this. Gilbert says everyone brings to the job their own personal "behavioral repertory." The behavioral repertory consists of three parts. First, Knowledge derived from their education, training, and experience. Second, Capacity—their physical and mental abilities. And finally, motives—their values, beliefs, preferences, likes, dislikes, etc.

Once people arrive on the job, Gilbert says they require certain *Environmental Supports* in order to function effectively. As in the case of a person's repertory of behavior, Gilbert identifies three environmental supports. First, Gilbert says, people need *Information* about such matters as the goals and objectives of the business and their work group, what is expected of them, how well they are doing, and so on. Second, said Gilbert, people need *Instruments*—tools, techniques, technology, process, procedures, work methods, organizational structure and so on to help them perform their work efficiently and effectively. Finally, said Gilbert, people needed some monetary and/or non-monetary incentives to perform the work.

Gilbert’s Behavior Engineering Model

<p>Environmental Supports</p>	<p>Information</p> <p>Business Strategies Goals/Objectives Expected Performance Current Performance Their Worth Index Their team’s PIP</p>	<p>Instruments</p> <p>Tools Techniques Technology Work Methods Processes Procedures Organization</p>	<p>Incentives</p> <p>Non-monetary Monetary</p>
<p>Person’s Repertory of Behavior</p>	<p>Knowledge:</p> <p>Education Skills</p>	<p>Capacity</p> <p>Physical Ability Mental Ability</p>	<p>Motives</p> <p>Likes, Preferences Needs, Values</p>

So, there you had it, said Gilbert. Put together the right repertory of behavior and the right environmental supports and you would get competent, even exemplary performance. Take away some or all of the environmental supports or ignore the person’s repertory of behavior and your would create incompetence. Gilbert even offered a "Behavioral Model for Creating *Incompetence*. He says, if you think about what happens in most organizations, we make mistake after mistake.

Mistake #1: Inadequate information. We withhold information people need to perform well. We don’t let people know how well they are performing. We give people misleading information about how well they are performing. We hide from people what is expected from them. And, we give people little or no guidance about how to perform well.

Mistake #2: Inappropriate instruments. We compound the problem by not allowing people to select the instruments they must use to do their work. We design the tools of work without ever consulting the people who will use them. We keep the engineers away from the people who will use the tools. As a result, right-handed people often are forced to use left-handed tools and left-handed people are forced to use right-handed tools. The instruments people need to do the job well aren’t available when they are needed or aren’t right for the people or the job they have to perform.

Mistake #3: Poor incentives. Then, we don’t provide people with incentives to perform well. We design pay systems that pay poor performers as well as good ones. We don’t make non-monetary incentives contingent on performance. And, on occasion we even punish good performance by, for example, making the best performers perform the hardest jobs.

Mistake #4: Poor training. We leave training to chance. We put training in the hands of supervisors who are not trained instructors. And, the training we do offer is often unnecessarily difficult and frequently irrelevant to the student’s purposes.

Mistake #5: Mismatched capacity. We frequently ignore the individual’s capacity. We schedule performance for times when people are not at their sharpest. We select people for tasks they have intrinsic difficulties in performing.

And, we don't provide response aids such as magnification of difficult visual stimuli.

Mistake #6: Poor job design. We ignore the individual's motives. Most people want to perform well, but we design the job so that it has no future. We arrange working conditions that employees would find unpleasant. And, we give pep talks rather than incentives to promote performance in punishing situations.

Given all of these common mistakes, says Gilbert, is it any wonder that most people perform at a level less than their best most of the time? It doesn't have to be that way. In fact, says Gilbert, we can use his model to decide why people aren't performing as they should and what to do about it.

<i>Environmental Supports</i>	Information	Instruments	Incentives
<i>Repertory of Behavior</i>	Knowledge	Capacity	Motives

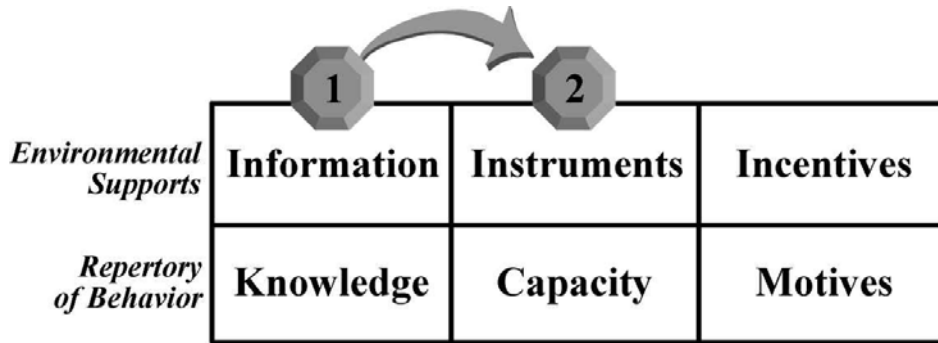
Gilbert has some definite ideas about how you should use his model as a diagnostic tool. First, Gilbert says, we should recognize that no person or environment is ever perfectly suited for the job we wished to have performed. There is always room for improvement in at least one of the six elements of the model. "The question," Gilbert writes, "is not *if* we can improve this or that aspect of behavior, but which strategies will yield the most worthy results: the greatest improvement in accomplishment with the least cost of behavior. The question is, Where is the greatest leverage?" But, writes Gilbert, the greatest leverage isn't where most people think it is.

When people aren't performing to their full capacity, says Gilbert, most of us attribute the poor performance to their motives (they just don't care) or their capacity (they are dumb). Wrong, says Gilbert. In fact, most people have the required motives and capacity. They aren't dumb and they do care. Instead of focusing on motives and capacity, Gilbert argues that we should be focusing on environmental supports and training. He even suggests the order in which you should proceed.

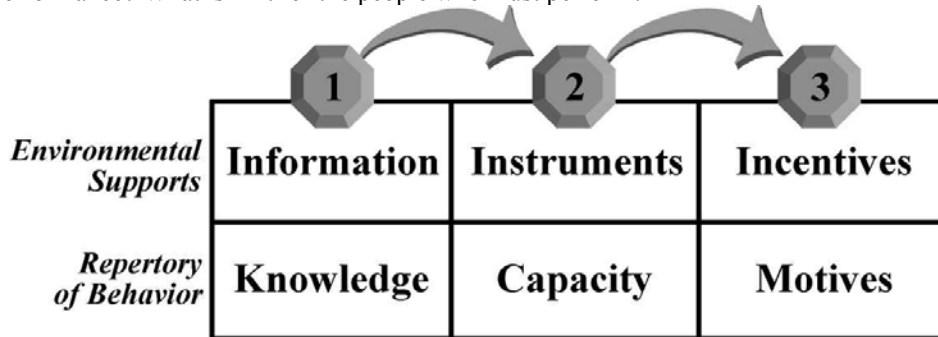
First, says Gilbert, you should ask yourself whether people have sufficient and reliable information to tell them how they should perform and how well they are performing. "Improper guidance and feedback," he writes, "are the single largest contributors to incompetence in the world of work, and a principal culprit at school."

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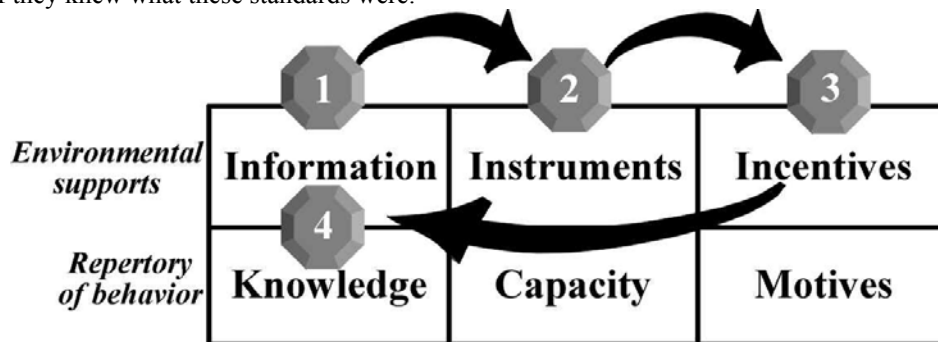
Next, says Gilbert, you should examine the tools, techniques, methods, technology people must use to perform the work. Have the people who must use the instruments been involved in their design and development? Do they have the right tools at the right time?



Third, check out the monetary and non-monetary incentives that you are offering. Are the incentives sufficient to encourage superior performance and are they directly contingent on performance? What is in it for the people who must perform?



Finally, check to see if people are lacking in some skills and need some training. Gilbert notes that training is often a powerful strategy for improving performance but is also an expensive one. For that reason, Gilbert leaves training for last. By correcting deficiencies in information, instruments, and incentives first, you make sure you don't end up training people to use tools that could be redesigned, or to memorize data they don't need to remember, or to perform to standards they are already capable of meeting and would meet if they knew what these standards were.



If you take care of the problems with information, instruments, incentives, and knowledge, says Gilbert, you will fix many, if not most, of your motivational problems. It is a neat and elegant approach to managing and motivating people. Once more, it is an approach that works. Try it. We have. We swear by it.

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