

From the Top

I still hear people speaking about 2013 as if “it’s about to get started.”

Though I hate to throw cold reality on a warm, comforting ideal, it’s *June* now, and we’re almost halfway done with the year.

Revisit goals and objectives. Take a close look at those things that are struggling to get off the ground—you’re starting to run out of runway. How are your people doing? Are we holding them and ourselves accountable for specific goals and accomplishments this year? If so, take some time to check on “percentage completion;” better now than a sad song in December.

Speaking of holding folks accountable; there’s an article below that speaks directly to the issues and challenges of performance management. Take it to heart.

If I can help with the coaching, leadership development, compensation planning, or strategy parts of your now-high-speed efforts, you know how to reach me.

Save the dates!

Tuesday, August 20th 8:00-9:30am is **Leadership 20-20**, a by-invitation breakfast overview of what we can expect—trends, forecasts, best guesses—for leadership during the upcoming 5-10 years. *Exclusively for C-level leaders*, it will be held at the J.W. Marriott here in Houston, and I’m buying breakfast.

This session will be a timely, informative, professional event with a fairly intimate group of senior executives. Invitations go out soon; if you fit the description (or want someone who *does* to attend), just drop me an email or give me a call and I’ll make sure an invitation goes out.

Thursday, September 5th is **Foundations of Successful Leadership**, the kickoff session for our *Pathways to Leadership* 6-session program. This is the same high-level facilitation as my in-house engagements (without the homogeneity of the same group/company), and open to the public. 8:00am until noon at the Woodlands Marriott. There will be a participant fee, but I’ll throw in breakfast to make it a deal. More details coming...

On Stage...!

This month’s video: *Developing People* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3p7g7Lz-mc>). I describe in plain language the simple process behind developing people. It’s neither cumbersome nor complicated, though sometimes appears that way when described or attempted by those who just don’t know.

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Know thyself; our *first* awareness must be *self*-awareness. Click here to take and receive a **complimentary Personality Assessment** (<http://360solutions.us/cp0.aspx?id=96&cid=169>). If you took it before and didn't receive the results, we've "fixed the glitch," so take a few minutes and try again.

He speaks... (apparently I have a message that resonates with some... who knew??)

I recently spoke to a senior staff on **Change: The Leadership Imperative**. As leaders, I believe we're slowly warming up to the idea that "change management" and "leadership" are synonyms; leading change is becoming less and less a discrete process independent of leadership efforts..

I also facilitated another executive group (senior staff) on **Trends, Challenges, and Executive Impact**. Sounds easy... lots of places to trip. Really good session.



You can't get there without a plan--HR Planning meets business success (<https://annual.shrm.org/sessionplanner/session/4121>). I recently presented this as a preconference afternoon workshop at SHRM 2013 in Chicago on June 15.



In the News!

HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

My Houston Business Journal feature covering my firm (and a large, multi-year client) for an article on team-centric executive development. (<http://triangleperformance.com/publications/>)

FORTUNE®

Fortune, Fortune Online's information website, recently quoted in article "Boom or Bust? Taking the brutality out of brutal honesty" (<http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2013/06/18/taking-the-brutality-out-of-brutal-honesty/>)

I continue to present on various topic, one in particular:

Leadership is Easy... until it isn't.

Successful leadership in challenging times...

(www.triangleperformance.com/kevinspeaks/leading_is_easy.pdf).

If you'd prefer another topic for your event, let me know (and give me enough time to make something up to impress you--you won't be disappointed).

If you have a corporate, trade, or association event, I'd certainly enjoy speaking to your group. You can see more information regarding speaking topics and details on my website (<http://triangleperformance.com/kevin-speaks>).

Further, feel free to download and read a few articles that may be relevant:

CEO & Leadership Style When Private Equity Comes Aboard

(<http://executiveimprovement.com/kevin-berchermann/ceos-leadership-style-when-private-equity-come-s-in>),

Leadership Success or Failure... Avoiding Organizational Incongruence

(<http://leader-development.net/kevin-berchermann/leadership-success-or-failure-how-to-avoid-organizational-incongruence>), and

Getting Communications Right... Don't Overthink This Stuff

(<http://humancapitalresource.net/kevin-berchermann/getting-a-handle-on-communicationsdont-overthink-this-stuff>)

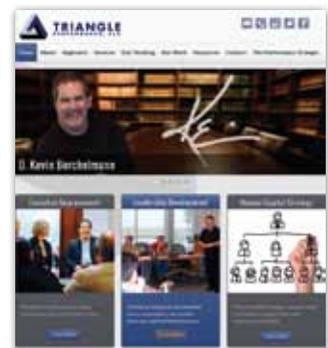
Have you visited my website recently? *Check back often*, as this new site replaces my regular blog as well, so I update content several times each week. **If you would like me to address a specific topic or content, email and tell me.** I'll see what I can do (your chances are good; surprisingly, I have opinions on most everything--that's a shocker).

Are you social? Like me on Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/TrianglePerformance>), follow me on Twitter

(@TriangleKB), or connect with me on LinkedIn

(<http://www.linkedin.com/in/berchermann>).



If you'd like to know how I can assist you, your organization, or a colleague of yours, please fill out this form (<http://triangleperformance.com/contact/>) and I'll send you some specific information, articles, engagement results, and so forth.

As always, I hope this finds you well, personally and professionally; please give me a call if I can ever help in any way, and **feel free to forward this to anyone you feel may be interested.** (Really!) *I appreciate your referrals.*

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'KB' followed by a period.

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Strategy & Leadership

Performance Appraisals:

-- *Pain in the seat, or panacea??*

Oh, crap! *Another* performance review...

How many times have we heard--or ourselves--this common lament? I'm guessing "lots" is a fairly accurate response.

The better answer, however, is "way too often." The performance appraisal process is the key to organizational improvement. To give that process the short shrift simply because someone has abused the effort sometime in your lifetime (maybe right now) is to say that, in effect, improving organizational performance is best accomplished by guesswork, hope, and good intentions. And by believing every supervisor who tells you, "Oh, yeah, I'm having regular performance feedback conversations with everyone who works for me."

I was born at night, but not *last* night.

One of the scariest things I've read lately--in the long list of ill-advised approaches to leadership--is this talk of "getting rid of performance reviews."

What a load of bunk.

We don't need to, nor should we, get rid of them. In fact, it's about time we doubled down and sharply increased the attention and use of this valuable process.

A puzzling part to me, is that most organizations attribute a poor performance review program or process to their Human Resources function. Another load of bunk. I'm not defending your HR department per se, but if your performance review efforts are anything less than successful, senior leadership--up to and including the chief executive--are squarely accountable.

Managing organizational performance is a **leadership** issue, not an HR function.

Some brief points to ponder:

1. **Why do them?** Done correctly, performance reviews align individual efforts with organizational goals and objectives, provide a scorecard or barometer for performance (think pay, promotion, training), and act as a solid vehicle in an employees' developmental journey.
2. **Who leads this process?** *Senior leadership.* It must--simply *must*--begin at the top. This top-down responsibility is as much a core responsibility as cost control and managing margins. Let's be clear: If you, senior leader, don't take this process seriously; if you don't complete them timely; if you don't enthusiastically support these efforts within your organizations, then their ineffectiveness is on **your** shoulders, no one else.
3. **Best practices** include casting due dates in stone--no exceptions. The latter part of the review should spell out and discuss--in clear, unambiguous language--the expectations for the future review period. Use objective measurements whenever possible. Subjective analysis should be a severe exception, not a rule. If **you** really can't measure it yourself, what makes you think an **employee** can?

Performance reviews are dead. Long live performance reviews. I'm fine with burying the old, HR-driven process that included so many cumbersome "extras" and "qualifications," as long as we replace it with something that clearly defines expectations, provides measurements for those expectations, and follows up on the performance to those expectations.

Anything else is simply accountability avoidance. Let's don't do that, ok?

Musings

Leadership and the Gerbil

-- Too busy being busy to take care of business

I was recently facilitating a group of mid-managers in an industrial organization; we were discussing performance management (apropos given the article above), and I asked them to identify one or two specific people challenges they were facing. Now, by this I meant *specific* challenges, e.g., a specific *person*, not just a generality like “we need training.”

As you can imagine, interesting dialog--and not an inconsequential amount of hilarity--ensued. These leaders actually led first-level managers in the course of their business, so they had stories to tell. **Lots** of stories to tell.

One was particularly memorable: this manager described a staff manager that worked for him as someone who was diligent, fairly committed, and reasonably intelligent. He knew what needed to be done. The problem, however, was that he frequently didn't complete tasks and accountabilities in a timely manner.

When confronted with this shortfall, he inevitably spoke of getting sidetracked, something taking longer than expected, a particular effort grew out of proportion, or he simply just got engrossed in an a task at hand and lost track of time. He wasn't making excuses--he didn't try and shirk his accountability for the misstep. *He was just too busy.*

Now, this employee was part of a group of employees (think project manager) that had similar responsibilities. Others were getting their work done timely, just not this manager. He was simply too busy being busy at *other* things to get to *everything*.

His manager called this the *Gerbil Effect*. Running in circles, getting tired, putting in a full day and feeling like you've really been working. In reality, this employee was more like the ill-fated gerbil, racing furiously in his wheel-shaped cage, becoming breathless but not gaining ground on a target or objective.

The Gerbil Effect. I like it, and believe strongly we have many who fit that within our charge as leaders. Let's help them break free from the evil wheel of business, get them focused on a real objective, and allow them to put that same level of effort and commitment into *succeeding*, instead of just the busy-ness of running.

But that's just me...

(Thanks, Mike and Ryan)