

ALL organisations have a mixed variety of employees who work in their own unique way. There are, however, some employees who are always occupied but not necessarily productive! They are what I call "actors and actresses". They really do not have much to do, but are always trying to create this perception that they are the most occupied people in the organisation. They think that showing up and "acting busy" is their version of work.

Some of the ways in which these employees go about their business of 'acting busy' are as follows:

1. They are always carrying files or laptops everywhere they go as these are usually perceived as symbols of work.
2. They are always walking fast from point to point, creating a perception that they are in a "hurry".
3. They leave office late every day, giving the impression that they are hard working and have a lot to do. Anyone who works late hours constantly will also sooner or later start to produce poor quality work.
4. They constantly tell their workmates about how busy they are. This is subtle marketing; the more times you tell someone about how busy you are, the more they start to believe in you.
5. When they really have work, they make sure the whole organisation knows about it by sending e-mails of progress reports which they copy to everyone in the organisation.

The trouble with all of this is that many times, these people get away with it, as sadly, many managers tend to be deceived by this "acting". These managers assume that the "busiest" people who work endless hours are the best workers and tend to reward them for busy behaviour instead of effective results. Furthermore, they also tend to think that the employees who are in front of their computers for long hours are more productive than the employees who are seen having coffee and chats with fellow employees. In a nutshell, they tend to be influenced by all these perceived acts of being busy!

The solution to this dilemma is to reward people for achieving specific, measurable work goals rather than for just showing up for work and looking busy. Some possible ways of managing these situations are as follows:

1. Set work goals and objectives for employees, and judge them by the results. In this way, results will always take precedence over behaviour.

REWARD PRODUCTIVITY, NOT BUSY BEHAVIOUR

2. Do not create an organisational culture where working late is the norm: Otherwise, even when people do not have work, they stay in late but are not productive.

3. Always reward productivity. Remember, what gets rewarded gets done. To increase productivity at the workplace, you need to reward specific behaviours and specific achievements with incentives like afternoons off, tickets for a show etc. This will certainly motivate employees to want to improve on their work performance.

4. Make sure you have the right person for the job. People who lack either the ability or the training for a job will waste enormous amounts of time and energy trying to do what they simply cannot do. Recruit a "monkey" for tree climbing tasks and "ducks" for swimming tasks.

In conclusion, it must be reiterated again that when organisations reward "busy behaviour" they will get actors and when they reward results they will get "producers". Ultimately, organisations must be able to devise means to differentiate the "busy" workers from the "producers". Only then will they be able to extract quality work through rewarding the right people. And only then will the organisation be able to achieve its specific objectives and goals.



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