

Turbo Leadership Systems™

The **TURBO** **Charger**

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To our clients and friends

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Time Out



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Clarified standards create improved performance

Tom, an earthwork superintendent for a large general contractor in eastern Washington, told Session 6B of the Leadership Development LAB:

"I began working for my new company in January of 2006 after doing essentially the same job for 22 years for another similar contractor. I started out working with two other earthwork superintendents and then met Shane, an apprentice. When I was assigned my first project, Inspiration Estates, Shane came with me as my apprentice assistant. Since I am new to the company and Shane has become accustomed to a different program than I want to create, I needed to feel him out and help him buy into my program.

He had many personal cell phone calls throughout the day. His work was poor; he seemed to be more interested in his breaks and personal calls than getting his job done. He just never seemed to be a 100% present, engaged with the ardor and intensity that are core to our company's values and success in our low bid environment. I thought to myself, 'I must find a way to get a hold of this guy, get his attention and his full engagement.' I called a time out, took him aside and expressed my concerns about his work performance. I carefully explained his behaviors that fell below our standards, areas where he had room for improvement. I gave him specific examples:

- A little late in showing up for work – technically on time to the job site but not at his work location;
- Drinking his Starbucks;
- Still in his street clothes;
- Incomplete clean up at the end of the day;
 - Not picking up behind himself as he moved to different parts of the job;
 - Hand tools;

- Cords;
- Empty boxes
- Scrap
- Three cell phone calls I observed already that morning.

There was no denying these behaviors that indicated disinterest and passive attention to results. I explained how I like to run a project and what I expected from the crew, and from him in particular.

Shane objected to a couple of my observations and tried to defend himself. I listened, then carefully, with more details, once again explained the standard of performance I expected him to meet or exceed. I agreed that I had failed by not being clearer about my expectations and standards up front before we started working together. I agreed to be sure and point out excellence and gaps in performance sooner if and when I see gaps in the future.

In the end, we agreed to work together to provide what we are looking for from each other. I could see that talking to him about the job helped him feel he is a very important part of the team.

The lesson I learned from this experience is by taking the "extra" time to be involved with crew members, to clarify standards, provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses, can change a team members' approach and immediately improve their performance.

The action I call you to take is give change a chance. Explain your vision and values to your team; make all standards for performance crystal clear. The benefit you will gain is the satisfaction of winning over crew members that will in the end make your job easier as well as help your team be more successful." ###

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