



## *I'LL KNOW RESULTS WHEN I SEE 'EM*

Employee Eamon is a new employee at a print shop. He has been hired to run a machine that prints out high-quality pictures. The pictures go to other departments, including the Catalogue Department, to use in brochures, catalogues, advertisements, etc.

Eamon's new supervisor, Séan, is new on the job, too. He's worked hard to get where he is. He was an expert at running the collating machine. Séan's machine took printed images from machines like Eamon's and organized them into the Catalogue Department's final product, a catalogue.

Séan doesn't like Eamon at first. Eamon looks just like Séan's brother whom Séan does not like at all. Still, as a new supervisor, Séan tries to give Eamon a chance.

Séan wants to be sure that Eamon does a good job. He isn't all that sure what "good job" means, but he thinks he'll know it when he sees it. So Séan sends Eamon to a course to learn how to run the print machine. The description of the course said students would learn all about the machine. That should work out fine.

### **Training for Skills -- or a Good Time?**

Teacher Tom wants to convince supervisors to send employees to his course. Tom claims the **result** from his course is that each student will know how to run the printing machine. Tom hasn't really thought about how to achieve that **result**. He knows a lot about the machine and likes to tell people about it. So he thinks he'll be a fine teacher.

Tom includes a lot of lectures in the course. He tells students all about the machine's history, some tough times he had learning about the machine and how students can get a lot done with the machine if they know what they're doing. The rest of the time, Tom tells students how to do the various procedures needed to run the machine. After reviewing the last procedure, Tom tells his students that the course is over. He tells them that they've been a good audience; he enjoyed teaching them and hopes they got a lot out of the course. Tom wants to be sure the course achieves its **result**, so he has the students fill out a questionnaire.

Eamon now likes Tom a lot and feels very good about the course so he gives the course a very high rating. Tom seemed to know a lot about the machine. Tom told a lot of jokes, the room was nice and the materials were very impressive. With all the stuff Tom told Eamon, Eamon now feels he could do anything with the machine. Later that day, Eamon tells Supervisor Séan that the course was very good. Séan is very pleased about his decision and is glad the course accomplished strong **results**.

### **What Are You Doing? What Should You Really Be Doing?**

The next day, Séan briefly notices that Eamon is much happier at his job. "Great", Séan thinks. A satisfied employee is a productive employee! Right?" (Wrong. Job satisfaction doesn't mean job performance. Some research indicates job satisfaction can actually decrease productivity.)



Later that afternoon, Séan has more time to watch Eamon at his job. Soon Séan is horrified! It doesn't seem like Eamon knows what he's doing at all! Séan thinks to himself, "I knew Eamon wouldn't work out! I just knew it!" Séan glances through several of the prints from Eamon's machine. He finds one that's smeared and torn. Séan concludes that Eamon didn't learn anything at all. He confronts Eamon. "What are you doing? You're slow and all your prints are ruined! You've wasted the company's money!" Eamon feels scared and stupid.

Séan and his company have a typical performance management problem. If Séan had followed the principles of performance management, he would have been clearer to himself and to Eamon about what Séan wanted as **results** from Eamon's job. Séan would have been clearer about how he would **measure** Eamon's results. Séan would have been more clear about how his expectations, or performance **standards**, for Eamon.

Teacher Tom has a similar problem. If he had thought more about performance results, measures and standards, he would have thought about what knowledge and skills his students would need to run the machine. He would have thought about how he'd know if the students could actually run the machine or not. Also, he would have thought about how well students should be able to run the machine by the end of the course. It's likely that Tom would have included time in the course for students to actually practice on the machine. He would have included some way to test students' skill levels to ensure they achieve Tom's preferred result. He would have included some way to later get supervisors' feedback about employees' skills on the job. It's very likely that Tom's course would have achieved its result: students who can operate their machines to some specified performance standard.

## Reasons for a Performance Management System

Back at work, Séan discusses the situation with his Boss Bob. Séan wants to fire Eamon -- and do it now. Bob calmly disagrees. He tells Séan, "We can turn this thing around. I'll tell you how.."

He begins to give Séan a broad overview of a performance management system. "Basically, a performance management system is a way to ensure we get results from all our employees. Heck, if Eamon's teacher knew about performance, Eamon might have learned something! They don't call it training any more, you know. They call it Performance Technology or something like that."

Séan interrupts, "Look. I can tell if Eamon's doing a good job or not. I've got his job description. I've used the performance appraisal form. Besides, I don't feel good about those performance appraisals. They're just something you do once a year, usually to fire somebody. They're just paperwork. The guys are scared of them. I dread them. I'm trying to build a team here!"

Bob responds, "You don't understand. A performance system is more than job descriptions. A job description lists what duties, what responsibilities a certain job has. It doesn't tell the employee what results are really expected of him, what he's supposed to produce. It doesn't keep telling you, the supervisor, how well you expect the employee to be doing at his job. It doesn't make sure that what you're doing is what your boss -- and their boss's boss and their boss' boss -- want you to be doing."

Bob went on to explain. "A performance system makes sure we're fair to our guys. They're getting paid what they're worth. They know what we want from them. They know what we think about what they're doing. In the long run, all of us in the company end up working toward the same thing. We're all pulling on the same rope. Maybe the biggest



advantage is that we're talking to each other about what we're doing, if we're doing it right and if it's really what the company needs. Besides, we managers should have to earn our own keep around here, too. I want you to take part in our performance system, Séan. I'll help you."

## Key Terms: Results, Measures and Standards

Bob explains, "In the performance system, the first thing you do is figure out what results you want from the employee.

"Results are what you want Eamon to produce so customers can do their jobs well. For example, Eamon's internal customer, the Catalogue Department, needs high-quality prints to do its job. Right?"

"Measures are what you use to know if Eamon is achieving the results or not. For example, how many prints is Eamon making in an hour? Are Eamon's prints smeared, are they torn?"

"Standards are what you consider when thinking about how well Eamon is doing at his good job. For example, the standard for "excellent" should be at least as many high-quality prints an hour as your best people are producing.

"After we've decided the results, measures and standards, we'll work together to track Eamon's progress. We'll make sure that we're all exchanging feedback around here, including with the Catalogue Department. That's the most important part.

"Any needs that Eamon might have, we'll record on a development plan. That might include more training. This time, we'll make sure that teacher knows about performance management!"

Séan heard everything Bob said. He was sceptical, but he decided to try the performance stuff anyway. Anyway, Bob was the boss.

## Performance Problem: Vague Priorities

Over the next month, Séan thought more about what he specifically wanted from Eamon. He talked to Eamon, too. They both decided that Eamon would shoot for 500 high-quality prints an hour, 8 hours a day, Monday through Friday. High-quality would mean no smears or tears. In fact, the Director of the Catalogue Department would judge whether Eamon produced this result or not.

Séan was a little surprised at Eamon's reaction. He thought Eamon would be a little leery. Heck, Eamon didn't seem concerned at all. He was actually excited! Séan actually felt better now, too.

Over the next week, Séan carefully considered the measurements for Eamon's result. He realized that Eamon really needed more training. "Thank goodness I found this out now," Séan thought. Séan realized this whole situation wasn't Eamon's fault. He reminded himself that Eamon was new, too. Séan talked to the Training Department. They suggested that Eamon go to a workshop where he could actually get practice with the machine. Also, they helped Eamon find some free time on another machine during second shift. That way, Eamon could get in some more practice.

Eamon attended the workshop. He told Séan it was hard, but he learned a lot more about actually running the



machine. He said the teacher showed him several things that he could be doing a lot better. Eamon was eager to get back to work. Séan felt very relieved. This performance stuff seemed to be working out -- and it wasn't nearly as hard as he'd imagined.

## Weighting Results

Several months later, Séan's boss, Bob, told all employees that he wanted them to take part in a Quality Circle. Séan told Eamon all about it.

Eamon complained to Séan that he just wanted to run his machine. That's why he accepted the job. That's what he wants to do.

Séan is now smart about results, measures and standards. He sends Eamon to a seminar on Quality Circles. Maybe that'll get Eamon going in the Circles. Eamon took the seminar and, sure enough, came back all excited about Quality Circles. Now he spends a lot of time around the coffee machine, telling other employees how great Quality Circles are, where they started, etc.

Soon Séan tells Eamon that he's not running his machine anymore. How's he going to produce his results? Eamon explains that he's doing his part for his Quality Circle. Eamon complains that Séan needs to make up his mind about what he wants Eamon to do.

Séan goes back to Boss Bob, asking for advice. How can he get Eamon to work the machine *and* be a good member of the Circle?

Bob explains that Séan needs Eamon to run the machine *and* take part in the Quality Circle. Bob notices that Séan seems puzzled. Bob explains, "Eamon can do both: run the machine and be a good Circle member. You just need to let him know what your priorities are. Let Eamon know how much time he can spend on his machine and how much time in the Circle. Be as clear as you were before about his results and how you'd measure them. In the performance system, this is called weighting the results."

## Measures: Some You Can Count and Some You Describe

Séan nods that he understands Bob. "But how can I measure what he does in Quality Circles?"

Bob explained, "Remember when we talked about measures? There are a couple of ways to look at measures. You can count them or you can describe them -- hopefully you can do both. With the machine, you could count the number of prints Eamon produced, right?. You noticed if the prints were high-quality or not. High-quality meant the images were clear and the paper was not torn. Right?"

Séan nodded.

Bob went on to explain, "About Eamon's Quality Circle, though, it's really hard to count something -- at least not without going crazy! Sure, you can count how many suggestions he makes. But if you do that, he'll be talking all the time and not saying anything! What other ways can you realistically measure what Eamon is doing in his Circle".



Séan thought this for a minute. "Maybe I'm making this harder than it is. How about if I notice the attendance record for Eamon, you know, you make sure he goes to meetings. I don't want to write down everything that Eamon says. Heck, Eamon only talks in conclusions anyway!"

Bob responded that Séan seemed on the right track.

Séan explained the new situation to Eamon. Eamon seemed pleased. "That straightens things out. Sure, I'll try it".

### **Performance Problem: Inconsistent Results Across the Organization**

Over the next few months, Eamon ran his machine just fine. His Quality Circle made lots of good suggestions to Séan and Séan's boss, Bob. Soon, though, Eamon and Séan notice that nothing was really being done about the suggestions.

Séan confronted his boss, Bob. "You've got plenty of ideas from us. How come nothing is being done about them?" Bob replied, "I know. I'm wondering about that myself. I'll find out."

Bob talked to his boss, Management Mike. Mike looked puzzled. Then he remembered, "Oh, that's right! The Quality Circles! Yeah, those Circles are sure keeping people happy. Keep up the good work, Bob!"

Bob replied, "I thought the Circles were to improve quality, not to keep people happy. What am I missing here?"

Mike explained that he really couldn't implement any of the suggestions from the Circle. "They'll probably just cost more money. Right now the company needs to cut costs as much as possible."

Now Bob was getting really irked. He said, "I thought our performance system was supposed to make sure that everyone was working toward the same goals. Why not have the Circle guys focus on cost-cutting ideas?"

Mike warned, "That could scare them big time! No, keep 'em coming up with good ideas. They're doing great!" Mike looked at his watch and said, "I've got to take off. Sorry. Keep up the good work, Bob!"

Bob left Mike's office feeling very disappointed and sad. He thought, "We have a performance management system. Eamon's doing fine. Séan's doing. I'm doing fine. Our department's doing fine. We're performing, right? Sure doesn't feel like it, though."

### **So: All the Parts Are Doing Just Fine -- Yet the Organization Isn't Performing!**

Employees, the department and management are all very committed and very busy. Séan's focused on getting the most from his people, including Eamon. So is Bob. They all know the results they want, how they'll measure them and what they consider to be great work. Yet the organization really isn't performing. It's idling along.

This situation is not uncommon.