Time Management: Killer Performance Can Kill Your Company

Time-management is so heavily preached and effectively ignored during performance assessment, that some common misperceptions about the nature of time-management have become rooted in modern management practices.

Two Common Misperceptions about Time-management

1. Time-management really means managing one’s own time, and is the responsibility of each individual employee.
2. Optimal individual performance of some employees or teams is proof of overall, healthy time-management practice within an organization.

Both of these misperceptions create blind spots that lead the management to believe they are taking an organization forward, while, in fact, the effects of their actions keep on weakening the organization inexorably at its core.

Overcoming Blind Spots in Organizational Time-management

Effective time use for an organization depends on the synchronization of individual and interactive activities, so that individual employees who require interaction with others do not interrupt other employees when they are involved in individual aspects of their work.

Overall performance and capacity of an organization and the soundness of its constitution cannot be maintained without recognizing:

1. An employee’s use of time in work patterns that involve interaction with other employees is as important to the health of an organization as the employee’s use of independent work-time
2. Supervisor behavior directly affects the ability of an employee to manage time at work: limited information about projects results in delays that are usually, and inappropriately, attributed to the employee, resulting in incorrect evaluation of performance
3. Family responsiveness in discussing work issues affects the ability of an employee to manage time at work and even overcome adverse supervisory presence
4. Employees who use their time in helping others achieve stellar performance are often overlooked during performance recognition
5. Employees who habitually interrupt others to ‘get things done’ for themselves and do ‘lateral delegation’ by asking for help, are more visible, receive performance rewards, but bring down the efficiency of the company as a whole.

Blindly rewarding performance, without taking into account the indirect costs of individual achievement upon a workplace, creates high employee turnover and dissatisfaction. It puts in place an employee recognition system that is inherently wrong and reduces the efficiency of an organization seen as a whole.

The Effects of Individual Heroics on the Time-management of an Organization

While individual heroes at the workplace are rewarded for stellar time management and performance, it is often overlooked that the organization and its general time management are deeply hurt by managers and employees who manage time by developing crises and forcing solutions – and thus gaining both individual achievement and workplace-limelight to the detriment of better employees.

One of the employees, recorded in a detailed study admitted:

"I'm one of those people who will ask anybody for help. I do not care if they work in our group, if they want to help, or if they do not want to help me. If I need to get something done, I’ll interrupt everyone until I find somebody who can help me; that is just the way I am. If I need to get something done, I just start putting the feelers out, looking for help. If I do not know
something ... there is no time to waste." The research found that on this employee's performance evaluation there was no mention of her disruptive work style. Instead, it just read: "She is very attentive to detail, takes great pride in her work and her output is of consistent high quality."

Unless, such behavior is examined and brought under inspection, organizations suffer. While conventional time-management techniques make individuals maximally efficient within a prevalent way of interacting, supervision of the synchronization between an employee's actions and interactions in the context of building the entire organizations capacity to manage time cannot be ignored. When employees are left to their own devices to optimize all aspects of their personal work-time management, organizations suffer as a whole due to prevalence of conflicting priorities in the workplace which are ignored by the management and not redressed.

References and Sources: