

Employees that are 100% responsible with 0% excuses!

Dane Huxel State Farm Insurance Agency, LLC



4/11/15

Executive Summary

Have you ever wondered why you can't get your entire staff on the same page regarding company goals and performance standards? Accountability is critical in achieving goals and reaching business operating standards. Setting—and communicating—meaningful expectations and goals are instrumental in helping employees understand how they fit into the business and contribute to collective goals. Wouldn't it be nice if you could very clearly align company goals and employee performance expectations . . . inspire each of your team members to accept goal accountability without question?

Problem Definition

As a new agent, Dane wanted to establish a clear understanding of his personal expectations and goals for a new team. There was no written document providing guidelines to follow, however. When asked "Dane, does your staff know what you expect with every customer experience?" Dane shared "I think they know what I expect, but I'm not 100% sure." Dane was also uncertain as to his agency's "Great Ambassadors" and "Less Than Great Ambassadors." Sales numbers and customer service quality were not consistent, resulting in extra work, redundancy and important tasks falling through the cracks. Producers were consistently failing to perform essential activities and meet goals.

Based on observation, they either felt no obligation for meeting goals or had never been educated on their responsibility for doing so. Everyone had understandable reasons for their failure to reach goals, but for a business owner, missing goals is not really an option. Dane felt that he had a relatively small window of time to improve his management abilities, so his question to me was: "What can I do to get better performance from my team?"

Solution Details

Owner Discovery Interview

I needed to understand Dane's perspective on the business and his expectations and goals for his new staff. We identified a number of significant issues during our initial discovery interview

- I. Dane's business vision and mission for the Dane Huxel State Farm Insurance Agency, LLC, need to be redefined, not only for Dane, but also for the staff.
- II. Team members needed to gain a clear understanding of what was expected of them and how their individual contributions fit into the Agency's "Big Picture."
- III. There was concern regarding a lack of staff accountability, "*which could cause failure!*"
 - a. Some team members still had goose eggs in certain sales categories.

Employees that are 100% responsible with 0% excuses!

- b. Something wasn't clicking.
- c. With 5 months of excuses; Dane was done with excuses.
- d. There was a critical need for a "New Accountability Model" to make everyone 100% accountable, no excuses.
- e. Everyone's activities needed to be measured for progress toward goals.
 - 1. Hitting daily outbound call goals was imperative.
 - 2. Daily time management had to improve.
- f. Dane decided he **would** consider terminating a staff member for under performance.
- IV. Production across the Life, Health and Bank products needed to be increased so the Agency could be better rounded.
- V. A documented, progressive discipline procedure and process needed to be created.
- VI. Dane wanted to see increased employee initiative.
- VII. More staff training on products and customer service was needed.
- VIII. Dane needed to establish systematic opportunities to discuss individual staff performance related to specific goals. There was a plan in place, but it didn't allow delving into the details of each staff member's marginal influence on performance.

Employee Discovery Interview

After the Discovery Interview with Dane, I was armed with information to have another alone with his staff. This is what I learned without Dane in the room:

- I. Two of five staff members did not clearly understand their job duties because of changes initiated in an effort to get the system working better.
 - a. Some team members were in chaos all of the time/overwhelmed and didn't know where to start.
 - b. There was no defined responsibility for completing certain tasks.
- II. There was concern about the ability to maintain/manage the growing client base.
- III. There needed to be an office calendar allowing everyone to see where counterparts were.
- IV. Getting collections done regularly would help cash flow.
- V. Lead quality needed to be better.
- VI. Finishing daily work assignments by the end of day so they could leave promptly at closing time was a priority. Blocking out designated times to work on certain daily tasks would be helpful in meeting productivity goals.
- VII. Meetings needed to have a more clear agenda and focus.
- VIII. No time was allotted for training
 - a. Visiting other successful State Farm Agents would be helpful in learning best practices.
 - b. Sharing success techniques with peers would be helpful in overcoming issues like "I don't currently ask for the sale."
 - c. All felt they could do better with clearer directives and time management training of some sort.

Employees that are 100% responsible with 0% excuses!

- d. "I have not been adequately trained for the job I'm doing" was a common complaint. Generally speaking, all staff members wanted more, regular product and service training.
 - e. An SOP manual was needed so that everyone could find answers if they didn't know how to do something.
- IX. A better dashboard was needed to reflect sales numbers. There was common confusion about compensation and performance goals.
- X. Staff wanted half a day a week allocated for sales people to meet with business prospects in the local community.
- a. All felt the need for more community interaction.
 - b. Staff members wanted a schedule that put them in the field calling on customers and prospects.

The Plan I Created for Dane's Office

The following action plan is the result of compounded needs identified in owner and staff Discovery Interviews.

Employee Manual. This document brought order to the chaos while adding structure to the business. It was the glue (rules, regulations, discipline, processes and procedures) that started holding the organization together and formed the basis for making each employee accountable. Dane decided he wasn't afraid to say what he thought was right, and he decided to work at holding the staff accountable for appropriate performance standards. Staff members needed to feel the "*burden of consequences*" for their actions or inactions regarding Dane's performance expectations and goals; the employee manual set clear benchmark standards.

Owner's Expectation Document. One of the very first chapters in the new employee manual covers Dane's expectations regarding his business philosophy and the Agency's mission. He explains his expectation that employees will adopt a 100/0 attitude towards all aspects of their jobs and be good community citizens. The Expectations chapter of the manual spells out additional performance goals relative to daily activities, number of daily pivots, appointments with customers, handwritten thank you letters, life insurance sales, outbound calls per day and CRM follow up.

Progressive Discipline Process. This document, which spells everything out including 1st, 2nd, 3rd warnings and related consequences, set the bar in helping each employee understand the importance of goals. Establishing and communicating Dane's expectations through a progressive disciplinary process was critical in improving employee performance and holding people accountable.

Written & Signed Employee Performance Agreement. It was important to *motivate and engage* staff with the belief that ultimate success would result from giving their personal best. Every staff member completed an "Employee Performance Agreement" effective for one calendar year. These agreements include personal and professional goals set collaboratively by Dane and the staff member and are agreed to on an annual basis. The Employee Performance Agreement is a tool that provides a reference point for accountability throughout the organization.

The Employee Performance Agreement aligns personal goals and activities with collective goals for the business. Responsibility starts with each single commitment to the overall success of the business.

Employees that are 100% responsible with 0% excuses!

Individual goals also help to define Agency structure and create a clear path for Dane while giving each staff member a measurable way to assess progress in meeting personal and team goals.

Quarterly Review Program. Dane needed to gauge whether or not employees were meeting the goals and expectations committed to in their Employee Performance Agreements. By evaluating and reinforcing goals, work performance and behavioral expectations every 90 days, Dane created a repeatable process—and momentum—for continued business improvement. Measuring quarterly results revealed performance gaps and successes, a process that gives both Dane and each staff member the opportunity to discuss successes and failures. The quarterly review process also offers an opportunity to discuss proposed corrective action if goals are not being met.

Benefits to Dane's Business

The main benefit of the **100/0 Program** is that Dane's employees have a clear, concise set of expectations to guide their efforts and Dane now has a process and tools for holding employees accountable. All staff members were educated on outcomes expected from every customer interaction. They now know what their goals are, how they add value and why what they do is important because they are intimately involved in the goal planning process. Providing relevant training encouraged good performance, strengthened each team member's job-related skills and competencies, and provided insights into how they were performing. Regular quarterly reviews have given Dane an opportunity to identify the developmental needs of under performers and Employee Performance Agreements have highlighted superstars that are exceeding established goals and expectations.

Outcome Summary

Dane's follow through in implementing the **100/0 Program** has transformed his operating environment and the viability of his business by holding individual employees 100% accountable for personal and company success. Goals and expectations are clarified in written form. Each staff member knows that reviews are coming and that they will be discussing their performance against established goals. They know they are going to be measured, and they are committed to personal and team success because they understand how their individual contributions are 100% essential in meeting company goals.

- ▶ Sales and market share are up!
- ▶ The **100/0 Program** brought order to former office chaos *by focusing on activities and goal accountability.*
- ▶ The Employee Expectations Manual was very useful in helping employees understand what was really expected of them. No questions were left unanswered.
- ▶ The **100/0 Progressive Discipline Program** helped identify under performers and those who were less than desirable company ambassadors.
 - The 100/0 Progressive Discipline Program had two additional benefits: 1) it enabled employees to see what needed to be done (or improved) to meet company expectations, and 2) it provided a systematic, objective tool for terminating those who were unable or unwilling to meet performance standards.
 - When a staff member does not meet goals or expectations, he or she knows that there will be consequences for failure to improve.

Employees that are 100% responsible with 0% excuses!

- ▶ During the first year, under-performers were given corrective action opportunities. If, after warnings, there appeared to be no other solution, under-performers were separated.
 - Once the dead wood was gone, the performance of the remaining team members was more productive and profitable—and remains so today.
 - The Agency regularly meets or exceeds its monthly and annual category sales goals.
- ▶ A teamwork culture prevails. Staff members pull their own weight and understand how their activities and actions affect their peers and Agency goals.
- ▶ Each staff member now has a measurable idea of their performance and goals and what they need to do to be successful.
- ▶ **Everyone feels responsible for business outcomes!**

Call to Action

Sure you're busy, but don't make the mistake of hoping your employees will figure out what they should do on their own. Help them achieve success for themselves and for your business by setting performance expectations and goals that invite employee engagement and commitment through a review process that provides feedback and links actions to consequences.

Because people work to achieve what gets measured, I encourage you to put a systematic, repeatable process in place to hold your employees accountable. You will find that when people are held accountable for the work that must get done, they become more productive and efficient!

Call me today at 314-378-6644 to set up a time for your free business assessment. It's just a few questions over coffee to look at the goals you have already set in place to determine how successful you are at holding your employees accountable for reaching your goals.

Dane Huxel's Testimonial

While it was obvious that there were problems with my team, I didn't have a clear understanding of what the root of the problem was. Their performance seemed lackadaisical, but I had no idea how to get everyone performing up to my expectations and aligned with my business goals

Part of the problem was that when I asked employees why they hadn't done what I expected them to do, I would invariably hear, "You never asked me to do that," or "I didn't know that was my goal."

Larry's **100/0 program** provided an actionable, transparent strategy and structured tools for identifying and fixing the performance issues without damaging my relationships with valued employees. Since employee feedback was an integral part of the process, they were personally invested in the outcome and welcomed knowing exactly what was expected of them and what performance goals they would be measured against.

The bottom line is that Larry held me accountable for changing how my business operates and I now have a clear, manageable process that gives each employee a personal stake in the success of the business. Each employee knows what is expected, what is measured and that each team member will be held accountable for individual and corporate performance goals.