Human Performance as the Bottom Line

Abstract

The human performance model is an excellent integrating construct for an organizational behavior class. This interactive session will introduce the participants to the model. It will have them experience the model in short exercises and through music. In addition, they will use a diagnostic tool to assist in determine appropriate interventions in the human performance model. Copies of the PowerPoints and the diagnostic tool will be made available to the participants.

Keywords: Ability, Motivation, Self-efficacy, Situational factors

Human Performance as the Bottom Line

Introduction

When you hear the question “What is the bottom line?” what crosses your mind? Many people think “What is it going to cost or What is the profit or What is the return on investments (ROI)”. As an Organizational Behavior (OB) professor what comes to mind for me is *human performance*. In my opinion, it is human performance that drives revenues, cost, and therefore profits and ROI. But making this topic interesting and experiential can be challenging. This session will demonstrate how this can be done.

Theoretical Foundation

The seminal human performance model was developed by Campbell and Pritchard in 1976. It consisted of two components: ability and motivation. Ability is the capacity to perform some task or cognition that an organization needs and values. Gilbert (1978) posited that worthy performance was indicated when the value of the accomplishment exceeded the cost of the performance. Campbell and Pritchard (1976) said that ability was a combination of talent, learning, and experience. The second component was motivation. Motivation is the willingness to performance. This willingness can be either external or internal or a combination of the two. So, the original human performance model looked like this:

Human Performance = ƒ (ability X motivation)

Campbell and Prichard (1976) posited that these two components are multiplicative in nature arguing that if either is zero there will be no human performance.

In 1980, Peters and O’Connor added to the model by identifying the criticality of situational factors such as not having the appropriate tools for the task or having a traumatic event occur in your life such as the death of loved one. They also identified that those situational factors could be positive such as a new technology or a positive work climate. Therefore, situational factors act as an additive component which either enhances or detracts from ability or motivation. The revised model then looked like this:

Human Performance = ƒ (ability X motivation) + situational factors

In 2005, the human performance model was revised again. Peterson and Arnn (2005) posited that self-efficacy should be added to the model based on research of Bandura (1986, 1`988, 1993, and 1997).

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one’s capacity to performance some task or cognition to an acceptable level to achieve the objective. Self-efficacy like ability and motivation is multiplicative because if you have no belief in your ability you will not produce any human performance. So the current model looks like this:

Human Performance = ƒ (ability X motivation X self-efficacy) + situational factors

You can imagine sharing this in an Organizational Behavior class and watching the students eyes glaze over. At the same time the model integrates many OB topics so it provides an excellent integrating point of view. In addition, there is a diagnostic tool for the model up to the inclusion of situational factors which can assist new managers in determining why human performance is not occurring (Mager and Pipe, 1970). The diagnostic tool provides recommendations for potential interventions that will improve human performance.

Learning Objectives

There are three primary learning objectives for this experiential session:

1. To become awareness of the human performance model and its integrating capacity
2. To actually experience the human performance model in action
3. To apply the diagnostic tool to the human performance model

Exercise Overview

I have used this exercise with both undergraduates and graduate students. It has proven to be insightful for the students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. You can spread this out over two class periods if you have 50 minute or 75 minute classes or you can accomplish it all in a 150 minute class in the evening. I generally have classes of 35 to 50 and have had no problem keeping the students engaged. I have found that a tiered classroom works better for the students because they can see better what is happening. The materials needed to run the early part of the exercise are a chair and a small object that you value. An alternative that I have added recently is to have someone who can play a music instrument come and play a piece of music they are familiar with and then after the musical piece is played to discuss the performance of the individual using the human performance model. Then I have the musician play a piece of music that they are not familiar with. Then we have a discussion about the second piece of music. Assuming that this proposal is accepted, my co-presenter will be the musician who will be playing the music.

All participants will get a copy of my PowerPoint and another copy with my voice over each slides. By doing this others who use this exercise could post the voice over PowerPoint on their Class Management System. Students could then listen to the content outside of class and then experience human performance once they come to class. In addition, all attendees will get both a paper copy and electronic copy of the diagnostic tool.

Session Description

The following is the timeline for the session:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Timing | Topic |
| 5 minutes | Welcome and Greeting |
| 15 minutes | Introduction to Human Performance  |
| 10 Minutes | Experiencing Human Performance |
| 25 Minutes | Advance Experiencing of Human Performance |
| 15 Minutes | Applying the Diagnostic Tool |
| 15 Minutes | Discussion |
| 5 Minutes | Wrap up |

During the introduction I will do a much abbreviated lesson to introduce the components of the human performance model. Next, I will have the participants experience the model through some very short exercises. Then I will have my co-presenter play music and we will discuss how this aligns directly to human performance. The advantage of the short exercises is that if you do not have someone who can come to your class to perform musical pieces you can still introduce this topic and allow students to experience it. Finally, I will introduce the diagnostic tool and the attendees will have an opportunity to practice with the diagnostic tool. Then we will answer any questions and wrap up the session.

References

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1988). Organizational applications of social cognitive theory. *Australian Journal of Management, 13*(2), 275-302.

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efﬁcacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist, 28*(2), 177-148.

Bandura, A. (1997) *Self-efﬁcacy: The exercise of control.* New York: W.H. Freeman & Company.

Campbell, J.P., & Pritchard, R.D. (1976). Motivation theory in industrial and organizational psychology. In M.D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology.* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Gilbert, T.F. (1978). *Human competence: Engineering worthy performance.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Mager, R.F., & Pipe, P. (1970). *Analyzing performance problems or ‘you really oughta wanna.’* Belmont, CA: Fearon Pitman.

Peters, L.H., & O’Connor, E.J. (1980). Situational constraints and work out- comes: The inﬂuences of a frequently overlooked construct. *Academy of Management Review, 5*(3), 391-397.

Peterson T.O. & Arnn, R.B. (2005). Self-efficacy: The foundation of human performance. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 18(2): 5-18.