

# The Establishment of Performance Standards

By Olan Hendrix

Do you know when management control begins with a missionary, or with a person taking over a Sunday school department in the church, or with the individual who is taking the job in the office of the Bible Society, or with the one who is coming into a strategic position in the hospital? Performance standards must be started *before* the person starts to work. Missionary societies need to do this with their candidates before they ever sign on the dotted line and the home board accepts them. Do you know what kind of people you will attract when you clearly state the objectives of the group and the responsibilities of each individual? You will attract the courageous, the goal-oriented, the self-effacing, the self-sacrificing. Always! But the standards have to be determined ahead of time. If they are not, and you have to go back and pick up the pieces, then it is more difficult. Even in an old organization where people go and come when they desire, it can be done. One day a lady who has visited a number of mission fields, said to me, "Do you know the great tragedy on the mission field? The great tragedy is there is not *must!* No 'I *must* get up!' 'I *must* have my devotions.' 'I *must* study.' 'I *must* finish this language exam.' 'I *must* see these people.' 'I *must* prepare for this conference.'" Management controlling forces us to put the *must* back into our work.

Management controlling is concerned with having an agreement with the individual that these are the standards toward which we are aiming. These standards are not unilaterally determined and handed down to the individual. Mr. A, up at the top, does not come along to a worker and say, "Look, you are going to do such and such." How does he do it? Mr. A, either on the field or back in the homeland, comes along and says, "Now listen, our goal is this. Here are your gifts. Here is your calling according to your testimony. What standards of performance do you feel we should aim at together to accomplish this?" People will always be more exacting with themselves than you would be with them, if you were to devise the standard unilaterally.

Then put the standard of performance in writing. It is amazing how illiterate we become when it comes to management! We will not write things. My first question to people with managerial problems is, "Does this fellow know his problem?" My second question is, "Is it written down and does he have a copy and do you have a copy?" The answer ninety-nine times out of a hundred is "No." *We must write down the standard of performance and give the person involved a copy.*

We who are in positions of leadership are required to love those under us supremely, but at the same time to hold them to the highest standards. The person at the top must constantly watch the performance of subordinates. How many people should a leader manage? Only as many people as he or she can effectively manage. What happens when a leader cannot manage all the people? Someone else should manage some of them. The people we usually elect to managerial positions are already so busy that

they cannot possibly oversee and scrutinize the activities and procedures of others. But this is what is so absolutely essential.

### **Performance Measuring**

The second demand of leadership is *performance measuring*. The person at the top must have some yardstick for measuring activities. What kind of measurements do we need? We need to know when a person gets up and when he or she goes to bed. We need to know how many vacation days are taken. We need to know when a furlough begins and ends. I have been in missions all of these years and I still do not understand how a missionary is permitted to just unilaterally determine, "I'm going home and I'm coming back. I'll let you know when." What kind of control is that?

Performance measuring is based on what we are doing and the goal we are collectively seeking to achieve. There are two elements: the standard of performance toward which we are aiming, and the person whose performance is being measured.

Psychology tells us that one of the basic drives of the human being is a desire to achieve. There is a fire burning in the breast of every individual to achieve something before he or she dies. This is especially true of everyone in your mission or they would not be missionaries. They would be back home earning money, storing it away, and living comfortably. When individuals seem to fight against management, they are not fighting because they are afraid that the superintendent or director is going to help them achieve something. They are fighting because they are afraid the director is going to *keep them from* achieving something. Such people are so individualistic that they do not want the missionary society to hinder them from accomplishing something for the Lord and his Kingdom. Management is not there to obstruct. While we push decisions down the ladder, what else do we send down? Concern, help, direction. The leader should be able to say, "Look, the whole purpose of our being banded together, having superiors and subordinates and job descriptions and organizational charts and decisions made is to facilitate the accomplishment of the thing that God has given you to do."

### **Performance Evaluating**

The third demand of leadership is *performance evaluating*, a little different from performance measuring. In my thinking, in performance measuring we are concerned about *one* person. In performance evaluating we are concerned about appraising the relative value of this person's activities of co-workers. This becomes even more difficult than performance measuring because with performance measuring we are usually concerned with one individual, but with performance evaluating we are concerned with many individuals and their activities.

## **Performance Correcting**

Finally, in the *performance correcting* aspect of leadership, we are concerned with coaching, with providing the “how” to people and, where necessary, correcting a situation that may have gone awry, always with the objective in view. Managers must not correct simply to satisfy their own desires or wishes. That is why goal orientation is a necessity.