

Consequences of Performance

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It would be great if people always took responsibility and gave their best effort without having consequences, but they don't. Many employees only work because they need to keep their job. Many families only pay their bills because they want to keep their belongings. Kids only do their homework because it's required to pass to the next grade.

In situations where consequences are less direct or absent, people are generally less responsible. The reason people don't eat what they should, get enough exercise, treat others with respect, or maintain other good habits is because they experience no consequences – at least not directly or immediately.

The reality is that most people think and behave based on expected consequences. People make decisions and take action based on what is at stake – either what they stand to lose or gain. If there is nothing at stake, most people see little reason to take action.

When leading yourself or others to behave, perform, or think in a certain way, be clear about what is at stake. If nothing is at stake, either establish something or don't expect the results you are expecting.

Listed below are various consequences typically used as either punishments or rewards. If you are an employee, consider these when asking for rewards for good performance. If you are a manager, refer to these when establishing and communicating the consequences of performance. Note that while both punishments and rewards are powerful motivators, great leaders emphasize the rewards. Keep yourself and others focused on what you want, not on what you don't want.

To promote top performance, ensure people's performance is recognized with **either more or less** of the following:

- **Praise** – verbal encouragement, hand-written thank-you notes, public announcements
- **Recognition** – peer, departmental, organizational, or industry awards
- **Symbols of accomplishment** – celebrations, promotions, plaques, trophies, recognition events
- **Tokens of appreciation** – gift certificates, dinner for two, donations to charities in the employee's name
- **Admonishment** – reproof, lecture
- **Empowerment** - change in responsibilities, authority, title, position
- **Monetary compensation** – raises, bonuses, commissions, stock options, or work hours for hourly employees
- **Resources** – expense budget, equipment, facilities, staff
- **High profile assignments** – special projects, operations assistant to a senior executive
- **Management oversight** – attention or independence
- **Practice** – time spent practicing the fundamentals or whatever does or doesn't need improvement
- **Professional development** – formative experiences, training, college, coaching, mentoring
- **Benefits and perks** – schedule flexibility, association memberships, travel upgrades
- **Time off** - paid sabbaticals or vacation, days off, afternoons off, or for very poor performance - permanent time off
- **Progress** – incremental progress toward other professional or personal goals

To state the obvious, consequences must not only be established, but enforced. A punishment or reward not applied is meaningless. Only establish consequences that you expect to enforce.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.alpinelink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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