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# Commitment Check: A Process for Enhancing Staff Performance

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Helping staff members and colleagues enhancing organizational and individual performance is every leader's responsibility. This responsibility is made easier if your company has developed and published clear position guidelines which include key functions and tasks as well as clear performance standards for each of the positions in your company. These guidelines and standards become the foundation for conducting skillful commitment checks, performance observations, assessments and coaching sessions as well as formal evaluations.

Most authorities on leadership and managerial excellence recognize the importance of giving frequent "on course" and "off course" performance feedback to staff members. I've modified an old saying to read, "You GET what you and your staff members EXPECT and INSPECT together with RESPECT and diligently put into EFFECT!" It has proven to contain some solid performance enhancement principles for strengthening interpersonal trust, staff moral and personal and organizational productivity.

My recommendation is to take the time to facilitate a Commitment Check process before the final selection of each new staff member and before assigning a present staff member to key projects or important functions and tasks. It is important for you to know in advance the level of a staff member's "will do" commitment and "can do" competence to effectively contribute to the achievement of your organization's vision, operating values, mission and goals as well as the specific functions and tasks of his or her position.

Experience indicates that most people want to look good, do good and feel good. They want to do quality work and provide quality service. To do it, they need clear, achievable performance standards set before them, the "how to" competencies to do the work, on-course and off-course feedback, coaching, encouragement and gratitude.

The following 10 steps in my Commitment Check process are those I encourage my clients to take as they develop and facilitate commitment checks between themselves and their staff members. They are comprehensive but easy to carry out. They can be modified and adapted to fit your style and commitment targets. They will help you and other leaders in your organization quickly gain insights into a staff member's true commitments before you delegate responsibilities to them. These steps will help deter feelings of frustration and anger you might find when you experience a staff member letting you down and failing to perform as you assumed he or she would perform.

**STEP ONE:** Develop a one-page summary of your own commitment check process and purposes and give it to all of your staff members.

**STEP TWO:**

Solicit and answer questions about the process and the purposes.

**STEP THREE:** Develop a series of appropriate commitment check questions in a "form" format. Give the form an appropriate title. Organization Vision, Mission, Values and Goals Commitment Check Form or Position Performance Commitment Check Form are examples.

Sample Organization Vision Commitment Check Form

Staff Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

What is the level of your commitment, 1 being low to 5 being high, to contributing your best character and competence to achieving our organization's vision?

What will that commitment look like as you play it out in your position during the weeks and months ahead?

What can I do to help you keep your commitment?

What do you need from your colleagues so that you can most easily keep your commitment?

How do you really see what we are talking about? As a covenant of commitment or convenience?

How so?

**STEP 4:** In advance, give each staff member a copy of the interview question form you will be using to record his or her responses.

**STEP 5:** Plan a simple, informal interview process that acknowledges and accommodates the personal and communication style of the staff member you are interviewing.

**STEP 6:**

Clarify each staff member's answers carefully and encourage him or her to elaborate and expand on his or her responses.

**STEP 7:** Write down the essence of the staff member's responses on a simple form that outlines the commitment check questions. Allow enough space between questions to record your short notes.

**STEP 8:** Review your notes with the staff member at the conclusion of the commitment check interview to make sure you record his feedback accurately. Add, modify and delete notes as needed.

**STEP 9:** Both you and the staff member sign and date the commitment check notes.

**STEP 10:**

Make a copy, give it to your staff member, and set a date to review your notes together to see how things are going. Repeat the review process at least bi weekly for a couple of months and then quarterly to "cement" and positively reinforce the commitments made and kept.

This Commitment Check process can be used for examining your people's commitment to your company's governing operating values, mission or vital goals. It can be used for checking the commitment to be a team player, engage in a project, carry out a set of position functions or tasks, or communicate openly with colleagues and customers. It works on anything where you want to help people think through their genuine commitment and help you better understand it.

Talk is cheap. Commitment to right, timely and competent actions is worth gold. Making serious, up-front commitments is part of being a person of intentional rather than conditional integrity. Helping your staff members be people of intentional integrity is a gift that will serve them well in building stellar careers that are highlighted by value-added service and contribution - a wonderful thing to look back on as they share their "life stories" with their children and with their grandchildren during their golden years.

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

## About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility. Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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