

Profiles in Performance – Jim Brady

For managers to be successful, they must be students of “performance,” in areas beyond just the people they manage or interact with. To create superior performance for individuals and teams, managers must understand the depth of superior performance in a variety of areas. There are many options for studying the superior performance of others, in sports, entertainment, and the arts. Successful performance is a combination of talent and a variety of elements best summarized as “energy-based” traits. Some would say these are vision, or commitment, or passion – others would use different terms that still fit the concept. There are a million stories about performance, this is one of them.

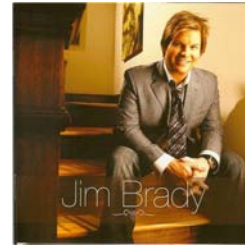
Jim Brady is a singer-songwriter, a member of one of the top Southern Gospel singing groups, the Booth Brothers, and a multiple award winner, including Songwriter of the Year in 2006. His talents, at first, are obvious. His mellow, but powerful baritone contributes to the distinctive harmonies of the group. His songs have audiences tearful, joyful, energized, and applauding for more. But beneath those obvious talents are the others that make the success possible. Singing, recording, and songwriting require the focus, practice, precision, and persistence to create and produce that go far beyond a “cross it off the to-do list” mentality of many managers.

Practice is a key to obtaining and maintaining successful performance. Other than perhaps debatable “training” programs, most managers rarely practice – they perform – the scoreboard is always on – everything counts! In athletics, it is more than dramatically opposite. Athletes often practice 10 times, or 100 times, more than they perform.

Recognizing our own talents is difficult – making use of them is often harder – but successful performance makes that necessary. Jim Brady became aware of his singing talents at age five, often singing (and recording) for four-five hours a day. He wrote his first song at sixteen.

Jim Brady is clearly closer to the athletic level of practice than the typical manager. On any concert date, 150 plus per year, there’s an hour of sound check/rehearsal and 30 minutes of vocal warm-up. There are frequent small song lines sung, on the bus, in a restaurant, in a motel room – all practice, all the powerful “visioning” of success. In a typical recording session, 7-8 hours of practice/rehearsal may yield 5-6 minutes of recorded finished material. When asked about rehearsals/practice, Jim replied simply: “I wish we could do a lot more.”

Message for Managers: How much do you “practice” before a selection interview, a performance review session? How often do you ask for more training – not less?



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Talent is only the first part of the equation. For Jim Brady, there is also the passion for both his singing and his songwriting. There's the commitment to sharing a message, a commitment to connecting with others, influencing others – driven by a strong sense of being called, based on Jim's strong religious beliefs, to use the talents he's been given. And it is that passion, that commitment that sustains the energy needed to perform at this level.

Marcus Buckingham's research on strengths suggests that less than 2 out of 10 people say they are "playing to their strengths" most of the time. The most successful performers are going to be found in this 2 out of 10. Here's a simple test for people's vision of their own future, a question: "Tomorrow you win the multi-million dollar lottery, what would you be doing two years from now?" Jim Brady's answer proves the performance, practice, and passion argument that I'm making here: "Singing and writing songs."

Message for Managers: It's Talent! It's Practice! It's Passion and Commitment! Become students of performance!

Profiles in Performance is a series of insightful perspectives into the talents and dedication of individuals who are defined by a variety of authors as peak performers, one of the "2 out of 10" who play to their strengths most of the time. For additional information, including a more detailed explanation of the concept and intent of this series plus an archive of profiles, visit www.performance.project.com