



Profiles in Performance – Michael Booth

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.

Michael Booth, a member of one of the top Southern Gospel singing groups, the Booth Brothers, and a multiple award winner, including Southern Gospel Group of the Year in 2007. His talents, at first, are obvious. His powerful tenor and passionate performances contribute to the distinctive harmonies of the trio. His performances typically bring audiences to their feet from their connections to his passion and beliefs. A moment later, an audience is relaxing because of the peace his humor adds to a performance. But beneath those obvious talents are the others that make the success possible. Singing and recording require focus and practice. The control of a performance, the management of the audience reflect the awareness of what to do for each audience, at each moment of a concert.

Message for Managers: How often do you walk through a day reacting to the demands of other people, the demands of an e-mail inbox, the demands of your real or imagined to-do list? Should you be actively managing performance on your stage each day?

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. Michael grew up in a musical family but his first love, practiced with a high level of skill, was as a jazz drummer. It wasn’t until his late teens that he stepped to the front of a church with his dad and brother to sing for an audience.



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Michael is a master technician when it comes to his performances. He can be heard offstage talking to his partners, talking with other performers, in very technical terms, about the detailed musical notation of a song, or a performance. He's frequently practicing the technical components of a song. After a performance, he's likely to speak about several songs where he only hit a "F#" when he should have hit an "B Natural". In addition to this practice and review, a typical recording session may include 7-8 hours of practice/rehearsal that yield 5-6 minutes of recorded finished material.

Message for Managers: How much do you "practice" before a selection interview, a performance review session? How often do you carefully review that performance, noting specific technical details of what you did right – and wrong?

Talent is only the first part of the equation. Michael took his early musical talent, added the skills of singing harmonies through hours of practice, and then added an enormous amount of passion and energy to his performance on stage. But this energy is not just added randomly to a performance. While the performance may be partially defined by a pre-determined set of songs, Michael manages the group's performance with the improvisational skill of a master. He reads the venue; he reads the audience constantly throughout a performance and adjusts. As a result of this control, he'll end a concert with an audience clapping and cheering to an up tempo gospel sing-a-long - or he'll end a concert with a contemplative ballad where each member of the audience just knows that the concert is over - and knows they've been touched by the magic Michael brings - magic in Michael's life that comes from his deeply held spiritual beliefs.

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