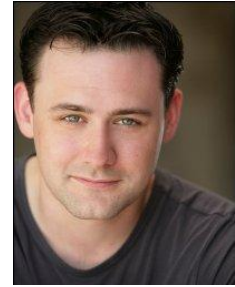


The Performance Project

Learnings for Leadership and Management from the Performing Arts



Profiles in Performance – Michael Ingersoll Part II

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 Ingersoll inspired one of the factors for this project –and because he so graciously provided extensive information, this is the second profile.

For the first act of “Jersey Boys,” Michael Ingersoll’s character, the talented Nick Massi, is a very observant, fairly quiet yet critically important contributor to the early success of the Four Seasons. In the second act, the character’s role becomes center stage. While each performer brings his own unique style to a role, Michael has perfected his performance of the slightly obsessive Massi character.

From his first performances in San Francisco to the final “Jersey Boys” Chicago performance, Michael’s performances clearly demonstrated one of the most important Performance Project factors: **Performance with Precision**. This is a factor clearly demonstrated by every performer studied for the project and as is often true for these factors, each performer demonstrates it in a unique way. For Michael Ingersoll, the uniqueness comes from a combination of the role itself and the impact of Michael playing the part for more than 1250 performances.

Michael’s role in “Jersey Boys,” that of original Four Season Nick Massi, has a subtlety in the first act that is noticed, I suspect, only upon multiple views – yet the subtlety adds critical points to the story that I’m sure contribute to every audience members enjoyment and understanding of the story. Many of these points are non-verbal, demonstrating as always the power of the non-verbal communications. In “Jersey Boys,” it’s Michael’s lighting a cigarette, a head tilt toward his date, and a glance away from another character – all precise conscious elements of the story.

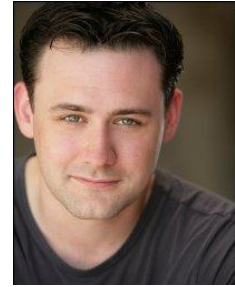
In an interview, Michael explained part of how this precision is maintained. He compared the task to a conversation, one on one with another individual. He described how that for each line of his part, even though he’s performed it more than 1250 times, he must listen carefully to how the preceding line is delivered, then deliver his line, perhaps subtly different, in response.

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Profiles in Performance – Michael Ingersoll Part II



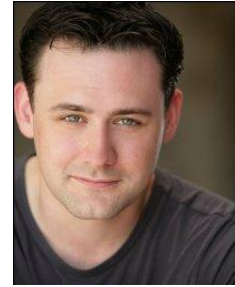
Message for Managers: There is little doubt in the world of leadership and management that communications is important – and within that the importance of listening. Yet there is still solid evidence that 85% or more of organizational problems are related to poor communications. On a line-by-line basis, Michael is first conscious of the need to listen carefully, then aware at this precise level to respond appropriately. Each leader, each manager needs to develop communication skills at this level. Difficult yes, impossible, no! Think of the impact it would have on performance reviews, coaching sessions, and...

In Michael's cabaret show, he performs a song that is significant on multiple levels – and another direct connection to a factor from the Performance Project. Michael performs the song "Why" from "Tick, Tick...Boom," the show that led to the review that led to his casting in "Jersey Boys." The song, a beautiful expression of the thoughts of a performer, growing up, expressing the passion of "Why?" For each person listening to this song, there will be individual choices on a particular lyric – the first that struck me was "*Over and over and over – Til we got it right.*"

"Practice – Practice – Practice" is one of our key factors. Athletes practice more than they actually perform. Something very similar appears for most of the performers we've studied. Michael did eight shows a week; the show is 2.5 hours, Michael arrived at the theater about 45 minutes before a performance and left within 10-15 minutes of the show's end. In an interview, Michael was asked about what he did with all the time, other than the shows. His initial response began with a little bit of a smile. For a show like "Jersey Boys," there was a lot of publicity work, television appearances, and performances at sporting events. But there was also the work involved -- staying physically in shape with strict requirements for the role. There were voice lessons, as Michael stated, because "you get stale." There were rehearsals, to work with new members of the cast, to keep the understudies prepared, because "you get stale."

And the message is the same for Michael's cabaret performances, planning, organizing, rehearsals, sound checks before every performance – the preparation and practice exceeds the two and a half hour performance time.

Message for Managers: Practice – Practice – Practice! On a day-to-day basis, leaders and managers have multiple tasks and multiple roles. All too often, the lights are always on, the scoreboard clock is always running. Yes, there may be a few days, even weeks, of training on an annual basis. But it's not enough! Leaders and managers need to engage in more rehearsals, for a selection interview or a coaching session, or... They need to increase practice time! It works for athletes, it works for performers!



Profiles in Performance – Michael Ingersoll Part II

The Performance Project includes two factors that recognize the importance of fans, with some of the performers studied actually **Redefining the Role of the Audience**, with how important **Recognizing Fans** can be to an artist's success.

After the final “Jersey Boys” show in Chicago, Michael was asked for a memorable moment from the show, Michael stated that at the end of the show, he can see the individual faces of the audience: *"All these different kinds of people who have come together to pay their money and play pretend and exercise their emotions. They're smiling or clapping or crying in the dark. That's the privilege of having been on this ride."*

In February, 2010, Michael Ingersoll did a symposium where an audience of over 100 people came on a Sunday night to listen to, and just talk to, Michael. He admitted surprise that so many people would attend – he was clearly grateful to his audience. I noted this at the first of his cabaret performances that I attended. From the stage he basically expressed thanks to each and every member of the audience for attending.

At the symposium, he expanded on the above moment. He explained that the performers can often see more of the audience that might be expected. They can see individual responses to certain lines, or songs – they get a reading for an audience that might be different in San Francisco than in Chicago, or...

Message for Managers: I envision a world where more leaders and managers treat their employees with the respect that outstanding performers treat their audiences. In some cases this is true. I've seen some excellent managers who have done amazing things to show their respect and appreciation. But I've seen and heard too many stories of the opposite. I know that a manager's role is different as is a teacher's – they have responsibility for directing, for coaching, for evaluating. But they can still show respect!

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. This is Part II of a two-part series on Michael Ingersoll. 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 and our special Performance Project blog, <http://performance-project.blogspot.com>