



# Four Barriers to Performance

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As HR professionals and managers, we spend a good deal of time trying to help people improve performance. Whether it's a remedial exercise (helping someone to keep their job by getting them to meet expectations) or a developmental exercise (helping someone take the next step) there are plenty of obstacles to prevent ultimate success. In most every case, we can diagnose the problem by checking the four barriers.

1. **WHAT:** Do they know specifically **WHAT** is expected?
  - Ensure the employee has received clear expectations - perhaps in the form of SMART goals
  - Confirm they understand the expectation and have a common definition of success - perhaps by having them paraphrase the ideal outcome.
  
2. **WHY?:** Do they know **WHY** it's important?
  - Communicate the ultimate purpose of the performance or outcome. Is it to keep their job? Help the team meet their goal? Satisfy customer expectations? Transform the business? Provide this context to help connect the performance expectation to larger meaning.
  - Confirm they understand the "why" - perhaps by having them paraphrase the ideal outcome.
  
3. **HOW?:** Do they know **HOW** to do it?
  - Even a seasoned, senior level executive needs instruction if they haven't done a particular task before. Determine the level of experience and comfort the employee has with the performance expectation.
  - Provide the instruction, coaching, resources or training necessary to support the employee in their effort.
  - If this knowledge/experience/skillset is a fundamental part of the job, consider whether role and the employee are an appropriate fit.
  
4. **WANT?:** Do they **WANT** to do it?
  - At the end of the day, the job is the job. If this is a non-negotiable component of the job and the employee simply does not want to do it, the employee must decide their path.
  - Invite the employee to apply motivational techniques to push through their resistance.
  - Invite the employee to consider a different more appropriate job to their skill set.
  - Determine that this is not a good match and support the employee in their transition out of the organization.