

BEWARE OF JEKYLL & HYDE JOBS

A financial services client asked for our help recently with a difficult to fill role in her customer contact center. The contact center had originally been set up to handle policy and billing queries, but, as part of a restructuring initiative that saw the company's outside sales force downsized, they elected to enhance the contact center role by adding "upselling" duties and quotas to the role. This was very logical from a functional point of view – there are so few opportunities to talk to your customers live, why not leverage customer service interactions into upselling opportunities?

But the impact on the employee performance was perplexing. Perennial high performers were falling short on quotas and employee morale was sagging. At the same time, some probationed employees were blowing away their sales quotas while increasing their customer complaints.

Using our behavioral job analysis tool, The Job Survey®, she asked her two call center managers to describe what they felt the attributes were for the ideal candidate in this new role. The resulting reports came back with a warning, stating that the job had contradictory demands – requiring an individual who would seek guidance and direction yet was assertive and strong-willed– and as a result, would be very difficult to fill.

This highlights a mistake that many companies make. They create roles with a focus on functions as opposed to behaviors. And what they end up creating are Jekyll & Hyde jobs that demand that incumbents adapt sets of behaviors that are totally opposite to each other.

Organizations that have built job descriptions focusing on behaviors as opposed to tasks, skills and experience have far greater success. In the case above, an inventory of behaviors resulted in a job re-design that improved productivity and helped the new contact center meet its customer service and sales goals.

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