



BE OUTSTANDING

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The reality is that this is what most people believe and I would argue a very convenient excuse for inaction!

Laura Ashley-Timms, the Licensing Industry’s very own Coach, has teamed up with Total Licensing to challenge you to improve yourself and your business. So read on... and then send in you questions to be answered in our regular ‘Coaching Corner’ feature.

Do you get as frustrated as I do when you receive bad or even mediocre service? Today alone I experienced two classic examples. One in a major childrenswear store where the 3 staff were all chatting around the till ignoring all the customers and unable to utter more than a one word answer when I asked for help. The second was in the UK’s largest supermarket where an error led to an overcharge - when I pointed it out I was told by the lady that it wasn’t her fault it was the machine’s fault and to go and queue up at the customer service desk! Sound familiar? It is one thing that can really wind me up!

Imagine...

How different the world would be if everybody started to ask themselves “What would I do differently if I

wanted to be outstanding today?”

Every manager out there knows that nobody comes to work to intentionally do a bad job. Yet some people constantly disappoint whilst others are the stars in your team. What makes the difference between these two groups of individuals? When did you last stop and evaluate your own performance?

Facts not Excuses

Do you believe that the “star” performers at work are more intelligent, better problem solvers or more creative than you are? Perhaps you think they are better risk takers or just more motivated? The reality is that this is what most people believe and I would argue a very convenient excuse for inaction!

The facts though tell a different story. In the mid 1980s research was conducted at Bell Labs (part of AT&T) just outside of Chicago on the subject of “Star Performance” and it was unequivocally found that

there was no cognitive, personal-psychological, social or environmental differences between the “stars” or “average” performers (How to be a Star at Work, Robert E Kelley). What this research suggests is that anyone has the ability to become a star performer if they want to.

So it’s down to you

The facts speak for themselves – do you want to be outstanding or just mediocre? The choice is yours.

What does it actually mean to choose to be outstanding? Clearly there would need to be a mind shift. You need to honestly evaluate your own performance and consider ways you could improve.

Ask yourself questions like:

- “What is stopping me doing a better job?”
- “If I were to do a better job what might that look like?”
- “Who do I know who does an outstanding job – what do they do differently to me?”

Identify any skills gaps that might exist that are preventing you from being better at your job. What would have to happen to fill those gaps? Is it finally time to approach your boss to go on that training course? When did you last do anything to improve yourself or your performance? How else could you achieve that goal if they say that there’s no budget for training? Or will that become your next excuse?

Helpful Strategies to Improve Performance

People who chose to be outstanding often use the following strategies to improve their performance – these are things that you can do too:

- **Take Initiative** – don't wait to be asked. If you see an opportunity volunteer to get involved.
- **Network** – not to be up on the gossip, but to be able to draw on your network when others ask you for help – you might not be able to help them, but knowing the right person who can will make you a valuable asset.
- **Develop and Improve your Technical Skills** there should be no point when you know it all – there are always opportunities to note new learning's and develop new technical skills.
- **Self Manage** – make your development/career your responsibility – don't wait for the annual appraisal by your manager to tell you what you could be doing.
- **Get Perspective** – learn to look at the bigger picture. Understand how others may look at the situation. Don't look at things through your filters only.
- **Lead by example** – even if you are not the official leader.
- **Be a Great Teamworker** the power of the team is always greater than that of the individual. Don't always try to operate alone!
- **Think of your Audience** whenever you are interacting with others, be it a casual conversation or the big presentation, take time to think how you can communicate your ideas or your message to suit the particular audience. Don't be selfish; it's not about how clever **you** are.

Don't forget that for readers of Total Licensing Laura is offering a completely FREE no obligation 30 minute coaching consultation.

So go on and pick up the phone, what have you got to lose? Your only risk is spending half an hour talking about yourself...

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Create the Vision of how you want to be

Take a moment to daydream. You have chosen to be outstanding and you are watching yourself at work.

Notice what you are doing, how you are interacting with your colleagues. Be aware of what has changed from how you were yesterday. Create a vivid picture of how you want to be. This is the vision of the new you at work.

Next steps – taking Action

Think hard about what marks you out? Why should people give you the business over someone else? Don't become complacent – no one is perfect, there is always room for improvement. Ask yourself honestly what you could do to improve yourself and then decide how to go about it.

Maybe it is finally time to go on that course you have been putting off for years.

Nothing will change if you don't commit to take action. You know the drill.

What are you prepared to commit to doing differently? What more could you do to be better at your job?

Write everything down that you think of. Decide on 4 things you will do straight away.

Write them down. Set a date when you will review them to make sure you have achieved them. Then set 4 more.

Choose to be outstanding – or risk remaining “just good enough” – it is after all the machine's fault!

Coaching Corner

Q: I have recently been asked to do something that I have not had experience of before; despite believing that this is something I should know how to do. If I ask for help it will draw attention to the fact that I don't know and will be admitting failure. What should I do?

Retail Buyer

A: If we were at a crowded concert and wanted to see what was going on up on the stage what would be the easiest way of achieving this? If you were a small child I bet you would immediately tell me that you want to ask one of the tallest people to let you sit on their shoulders!

Didn't we all do that when we were young? Then we became self-conscious.

Learn from the child. You don't need to figure out how to grow 5 feet in 5 minutes – you just need to find someone who is already 5 feet taller than you and ask to borrow his or her height!

Asking for help is a sign of strength not a weakness – so reframe. It is a limiting belief that you hold if you think admitting a skill gap is failure. Change this belief. What would it be like if you believed instead that every time you asked for help you were growing more knowledgeable and developing your skills? Wouldn't that start to feel good?

The real skill is in finding someone who already knows the answer and asking them to share their knowledge with you. The irony is that people genuinely like to be able to share and help others; it gives them a feeling a worth, what we call a win-win, and not a glimpse of failure in sight! If you chose to fake it, you will inevitably put yourself under unnecessary pressure and prevent yourself from achieving a faster learning curve. So take the plunge! Find someone who has done the job before; ask them where they might have started if they were given the same task and what they can share with you to help you do a great job.