

Rosanna M. Longenbaker

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Dr. James M. Kusack

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### Management Book Assignment

In his book *Shine*, Dr. Hallowell organizes instructions for how managers can help improve their employees' performance into a five-stage cycle that is supported with psychological and biological research. By determining which stage an employee is in and following the order of the cycle a manager can assist an employee in producing their best work. The information could easily be applied to settings outside of the business world. Hallowell's "Cycle of Excellence" is different from strategies offered in other books. He states that, "What is unique in this book is the *synthesis* of these seemingly unrelated ideas into a plan that any manager can enact. The value of the Cycle of Excellence lies in its melding a wealth of diverse, proven knowledge and wisdom into *a logical succession of steps*—each step growing from the previous one" (2011, p. 39).

### How *Shine* Applies to Libraries

Hallowell (2011) devotes a chapter to each of the five stages in his cycle. These stages are "select," "connect," "play," "grapple and grow," and "shine." Here is how those steps could be applied in a library setting. The first stage is when an employee should "select." "Before a person does any-thing, he should figure out what he *should* do" (Hallowell, 2011, p. 34). A manager can work with the employee to determine if he or she is truly doing the type of tasks that he or she likes (Hallowell, 2011). A manager could find out what staff members really want to be doing through an open conversation. A list of questions to help people think about what

they would like to do is included in *Shine*. The employee should have a few weeks to think about and write responses to the questions. This list gives the user an explanation for why each question is being asked to prevent the user from worrying that there is a psychological trick going on in the test (Hallowell, 2011). In a library setting, a manager could give this test to staff and allow them time to think. After staff members had meet with the manager, perhaps people could be moved to different sections of the library or assigned different tasks that would be of more interest to them. Some staff members could be encouraged to get further training to become librarians if that was what would suit them.

The second stage relates to building connections. Hallowell points out that, “In the 1970s, Lisa Berkman ... lead a pioneering study that proved social isolation leads to early death” (2011, p. 81). In order to make connections in a library, the staff would need to get to know each other. Perhaps they could eat lunch in a room that had a layout so that people could easily talk to each other. Icebreaker activities could be held at meetings that could fuel later discussion between staff members who find that they have something in common. Hallowell cited an instance where a group sharing activity led to a long term Hollywood collaboration. Hallowell cites research from Tom Rath that, “people who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be positively engaged with that work” (Hallowell, 2011, p. 86-7). The goal of staff feeling connected is to help them do their best work. “In peak performance, a person loses self-conscious thought and becomes one with the action at hand, entering into flow” (Hallowell, 2011, p. 87). Having connections in an organization can also lessen the fear that exists where there are not connections. According to Hallowell, “There is no greater cause of underachievement than fear” (2011, p. 89). In a library, connections could help to alleviate the fear associated with budget cuts or the fear of technological changes.

The third step according to Hallowell is “play.” This is when staff members use their creativity. Play prepares staff to “improvise” (Hallowell, 2011). This would help when a reference librarian is thinking and experimenting with new ways of helping a patron to find a great article or manuscript that will help their research. It could also be an indexer trying to come up with search terms that a reader will use or a cataloger making archival holdings searchable to the public through metadata. Many other aspects of library work would benefit from creative thought. Hallowell suggests that play be supported by managers asking open-ended questions, having a silly activity day, playing with children, decorating workspace, or, “read[ing] a book on creative thinking-techniques” (2011, p.127-131). These suggestions could all be implemented in a library.

The fourth stage is called “grapple and grow.” This is the point at which people can be encouraged to work harder. The idea being that if someone is working in an area that they are knowledgeable in and all of the previous stages of the cycle have been fulfilled the staff member can be pushed to do more and succeed at new challenges (Hallowell, 2011). In a library this would be when a new worker is given more complex tasks or when the staff works together to overcome an obstacle such as how to show their value in the face of potential budget cuts or provide quality service in spite of a setback. Hallowell (2011) gives suggestions of how managers could encourage groups of employees in similar situations.

“Shine” is the fifth and final stage where a person is doing their best work consistently. At this point, the staff needs to be rewarded for their work (Hallowell, 2011). Library staff could be recognized for their achievements at an organized event. Hallowell (2011) shares examples of recognition events held at Harvard. Perhaps a bulletin board announcement, an article in a newsletter, or a special name badge could have the same effect.

### Conclusion

The recommendations in this book could easily be adapted for use by a manager in a library setting. By grouping the material into stages, Hallowell has organized it in a way that a manager would be able to more easily know where to begin and how to continue when encouraging staff to achieve their best performance. The book also provided many examples to help managers along.

References

Hallowell, E. M. (2011). *Shine: Using brain science to get the best from your people*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.