

BONUS — Concept Eleven — OPTIONAL meditation and writings for conference registrants:

Please read Concept Eleven in our “12, 12, and 12” book, then spend several minutes meditating on each of the questions below. We suggest answering every question we’ve posed; first in writing, then reading your answers aloud, sharing with a fellow BDAer or two. No long essays are necessary, just a paragraph or two in direct answer to a question. These questions are posed by the author and editors of the workshop materials based on our own experience, strength, and hope and a deep read of Concept Eleven. Most if not all of the questions below can be applied to our personal and business lives, as well as to our interactions with our fellow DAers.

Concept Eleven: “While the Trustees hold final authority for DA World Service administration, they will be assisted by the best possible staff members and consultants. Therefore, serious care and consideration will always be given to the compensation, selection, induction to service, rotation, and assignments for special rights and duties for all staff with a proper basis for determining financial compensation.”

- 1) Who selects staff and consultants in my business or workplace? Do I or they exercise serious care and consideration in using my or their authority in this area?
- 2) Are there clear policies for how staff and consultants are expected to behave and perform in my business or workplace? Who is responsible for updating policies when necessary?
- 3) Is there a formal performance review process in my business or workplace? Does everyone understand how the process works?
- 4) Who sets compensation for staff and consultants in my business or workplace? Are salaries and wages competitive, ensuring that experienced and capable employees are hired and retained?
- 5) Are managers and leaders in my business or workplace known for “respect, fairness, and honesty”? Do employees respond with “professionalism and dedication”?
- 6) Is everyone in my business or workplace clear about who they report to? Are there any instances of “double-headed management”?

DA’s staff is small — one part-time (as of this writing) Office Manager and one part-time assistant. There’s little for us to discuss there. Yet Concept Eleven, like Tradition Eleven, may be the most relevant Concept to our businesses. As suggested by one of the business owners we’ve quoted in BDA tool Eleven on a previous page, almost every successful business must grow at some point, even if just to satisfy a large contract or an especially busy season. Help must be hired, as either employees or contractors. They must be taught, and they must be trusted to represent our businesses on our behalf. How this shift in our businesses goes will often make clear whether we will continue growing or shrink back to something we can do by ourselves. Still on the theme of the Elevens, it’s time to “invite Higher Power in” and to invite helpers and advocates in too.

BONUS — Concept Eleven — OPTIONAL meditation and writings for conference registrants — continued:

Let's take a look at performance planning. A performance plan is often part of an annual performance review. A performance review looks at past performance, and an effective performance plan contains all the information we and an employee (or semi-permanent contractor) need to *plan for the future*. To be as useful as possible, a performance plan would include:

Organizational strategy: Every employee's job exists to further an organization's strategic goals. An employee needs to be able to understand how their job fits into the purpose of the organization, both in the present and in the future. Linking an employee's job to the organization's strategy will help them to see their role in the organization's success or failure, providing a foundation for personal motivation. Every worker is more likely to feel responsible and to be accountable when they understand their contributions to the outputs of the organization that employs them.

Employee performance: We ought to focus on an employee's personal performance, avoiding comparisons with other employees. We can look at the specific activities they are responsible for and assess their work in a vacuum. Are they meeting their targets? If not, what issues are keeping them from meeting a specific performance standard? If they are consistently exceeding their targets, are those targets challenging enough? Is the employee ready for more responsibility?

Personal characteristics: It is very useful to include a section in a performance plan that addresses personal characteristics, such as professionalism, leadership skills, teamwork, and customer focus. The characteristics can be tailored to fit any organization and its objectives. For example, if an organization has a call center, they may focus on professionalism, communication skills, and problem solving. If an organization is non-profit and relies on donations for income, they may emphasize innovation, financial awareness, and creativity.

Past accomplishments: Just as it is important to note areas for improvement, it is equally important to pay special attention to accomplishments. We ought to analyze patterns of behavior so that we can determine if an employee is maintaining high standards of accomplishment. We can use their past accomplishments as the basis for future growth.

Development needs and challenges: Allowing an employee input on these topics will ensure that they have a sense of buy-in and ownership in the plan. Including this topic in their performance plan also shows that we care about their growth, education, and contentment within our organization. Developmental needs can be both action-based and behavior-based. Actions may be specific tasks, like answering calls or achieving a certain quality score. Behaviors may be more like professionalism, ethical sense, or financial awareness. By including both types of improvement areas, an employee has an opportunity to have both short-term and long-term goals to address throughout the next appraisal period.

Finally, let's consider how we might prepare for a performance review with an employee. Each manager or business owner prepares for appraisal meetings differently, but there are some actions we can take to make the process relatively easy. If we want to keep good employees (or semi-permanent contractors) growing with our businesses:

Gather information throughout the year: As we witness areas for improvement or instances of success, we can discuss them with an employee at that time and document the specifics for the next appraisal. It is rarely easy to recall everything that happened in the past month, and it is impossible to remember everything we've witnessed during the past twelve months. Creating written reminders about our employees' performances will help us to look beyond recent behaviors and actions. Additionally, documenting performance throughout the year helps to reveal and measure improvement, deterioration, or a plateau in performance.

Make time for review and discussion: It is important to allow enough time to go over an entire appraisal form or document and to allow for any possible discussion. Especially when there is disagreement between an employee's self-assessment and our rating, discussion will be needed, and it may be potentially lengthy. An hour is usually plenty of time for a primarily positive appraisal. (Primarily negative appraisals generally take longer.) This allows sufficient time for discussion yet prevents the emotional drain that would result from a two- or three-hour appraisal meeting. We can be sure to make the scheduled end-time for a meeting clear and stick to it.

Create an agenda: We can create an agenda to keep the meeting flowing and have all the necessary documentation present. We can try to anticipate how an employee is going to react and any questions that might be asked, especially if an appraisal is unfavorable. During our meeting, we can pay attention to an employee's body language. If they cross their arms or their eyes look unfocused, they may not be hearing what is being said to them. We can give them a moment to reflect and then use our agenda to guide them back into the discussion. We can make sure that our agenda includes plenty of response time for the employee. We ought to share the agenda with the employee ahead of time if possible. We can ask the employee for a list of items they would like to have included so that those items can be included in the discussion at an appropriate point.

Avoid surprises: An appraisal meeting is not the time for surprises. Employees should know ahead of time if there are deficiencies in performance. For example, if an employee has been consistently tardy, an annual appraisal meeting is not the appropriate time to discuss it with them for the first time. The problem should have been discussed when it occurred, and it should be mentioned in the appraisal meeting only as an area for improvement during the upcoming year.