THE JOYFUL PERFORMANCE MODEL | NO. 2: OBSERVE

ATTENTION PEOPLE CAN COUNT ON

The habit that makes your people feel seen and your coaching impossible to argue with



- **Just 16% of employees say their last conversation with their manager was extremely meaningful.**
- **Only about one in four strongly agree their manager's communication is what it should be.**

Gallup, A Great Manager's Most Important Habit, 2024; Gallup, Leadership and Management Indicator, 2025

Impressions are not evidence

When performance slips, leaders often react to the last thing they saw or heard secondhand, then coach based on a story rather than the facts. Good work goes unrecognized because no one was watching closely, and real problems get misdiagnosed because the manager was not close enough to see the cause. Observation is not surveillance. See the work as it happens and collect what you actually see and hear. Use facts, not judgments. This is where people feel seen, and being seen is where joy at work starts.

Three in-the-moment signs you are not observing enough

- Performance problems surprise you that others on the team saw coming.
- Your feedback gets met with "that is not what happened," or examples you never knew about.
- You judge how someone is doing by the loudest moment or the last incident.

Adjust your approach – observe on purpose with five habits

1. **Watch the work, not just the result.** Look at how the outcome happened, not only whether it did.
2. **Get close enough to see.** Be present where the work happens, in person or on the call, often enough to catch patterns.
3. **Note specifics as you go.** Capture what you saw in the moment so the conversation later rests on fact, not memory.
4. **Look for both.** Catch what is going well as deliberately as what is going wrong.
5. **Separate what you saw from what you assume.** Don't let your assumptions about someone cloud what you see.

Be present.

Observation is the bridge between a clear expectation and a conversation worth having. Watch closely and consistently, and your people feel seen while your coaching earns its credibility. The results compound when you pair steady observation with clear expectations. It goes even further when you consistently celebrate wins and develop concrete plans to close performance gaps.

Want help building this into your business? Let's talk.

Want to dip your toes in first? Join The Joyful Leadership Lab, a free monthly discussion group.

Emily Gospodarek | Owner, Performance Consulting Services, LLC
Certified Everything DiSC and Five Behaviors Practitioner | www.PerformanceConsultingServicesLLC.com
Emily@PerformanceConsultingServicesLLC.com | 207-987-0726

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