

Video Script for:

# Building Employee Morale™ *Missed Opportunities*

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## **Graphic**

Most job standards have a possible rating of Meets Standards, Exceeds Standards, and Needs Improvement; Right?

## **Graphic**

Do you agree that an employee who is meeting job standards is making a positive contribution to the organization?

## **Graphic**

Do you agree that an employee who is meeting job standards is making customers happy?

## **Graphic**

Yet, employees who receive a Meets Job Standards rating on an evaluation are too often walking away from the evaluation WITHOUT a sense of achievement.

## **Graphic**

That is what we call "the meets problem."

## **Graphic**

Let's observe a lunch conversation between three managers and learn more about the meets problem and a common missed opportunity to build employee morale.

***FADE TO SCENE: In a Restaurant. Three Managers are having lunch, John, Jim, and Linda. Asad, the server approaches their table.***

**Server:** How are ya'll doing? OK?

**John:** We're doing great; could we get our check please?

**Server:** Sure. How was everything?

**John:** Excellent! It was cooked right, it came out fast... good service... Thank you!

**Server:** Great! I'll be right back.

**Linda:** Jim, stop and go over the Meets problem thing.

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**Jim:** Ah! Yes, the meets problem. Let's talk about standards and ratings for a minute... Most of our job standards have a possible rating of Meets Standards, Exceeds Standards, and Needs Improvement; Right?

**John:** Meets Standards, Exceeds Standards, or Needs Improvement. Yes. Some measurements are Meets or Needs Improvement only, but yes, generally, you are correct sir!

**Jim:** Let me establish something first before I go on. Do you agree that an employee who is meeting job standards is making a positive contribution to the organization?

**John:** Yes.

**Jim:** Even though they are just MEETING job standards? Not EXCEEDING them?

**John:** Yes. Our job standards are set according to what our customers expect from us. Therefore, an employee who is meeting job standards is making customers happy.

**Jim:** Good.

**John:** You seem like you're settin' me up for something; I feel like my answers are wrong for some reason.

**Jim:** No, you're absolutely right. An employee who is Meeting job standards is making customers happy. However, along with a rating system, you also get the problem I call "The Meets Problem."

**John:** The Meets Problem?

**Jim:** Would you agree that a common problem we face when evaluating and rating employees is a funky reaction to a Meets rating?

**Linda:** Have you ever noticed how employees get all depressed when they get a Meets rating; they're usually dissatisfied when they don't get an Exceeds Standards rating.

**John:** Yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. I actually dread giving out a meet's rating as much as I do a Needs Improvement rating; I'm not kidding; employees make me feel as if I am giving them bad news. I have employees that even get defensive, sometimes mildly-hostile - as if their job is on the line!

**Jim:** But the thing is; it's probably normal to feel disappointed. Hostile? No. But disappointed, yes, I can relate to that. I used to see a Meets ratings as saying that I am just "so so;" just satisfactory.

**Linda:** It's a boring score.

**Jim:** It's like an honor roll thing. And traditionally, consistently meeting job standards is not the way onto the bosses honor roll; you must consistently exceed job standards. I think everyone's disappointed when we are not on the bosses honor roll. So I want to be on the

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bosses honor roll as much as the next guy...but why? Why do we want to be on the honor roll? Why are we so bummed when we don't exceed standards?

*Jim pauses for effect – John Raises his eyebrows waiting for the answer.*

**Linda:** Because you get praise and ataboys and pats on the back for exceeding standards. You get kudos and a feeling of achievement.

**John:** I'm with you. But what's the point? That's just the way humans are; almost all of us thrive on the special attention we get when we've exceed expectations.

**Jim:** But do we thrive on the exceeds rating, or the attention that comes as a result of the exceeds rating?

**John:** Both, I'd say, but mostly the attention – the praise. OK, I see where you guys are going...I think.

**Jim:** Yes, I agree. Many employees' NEED a strong-sense of achievement in their jobs, and almost all employees at least desire it. If employees are disappointed with their evaluation; they are robbed of their sense of achievement.

**John:** And you have studies to back this up, right doctor?...I'm sorry. Keep going.

**Jim:** If employees are robbed of their sense of achievement, they are more likely to leave the company in search of a job that WILL give them that sense of achievement. So, I believe The Meets Problem not only has an impact on employee morale, and performance; it also impacts employee retention.

**John:** So why don't we just shift our ratings up a notch, make the Needs Improvement scores the new Meets Standards, label the current Meets Standards as Exceeds, and then create a new rating for the current exceeds standards, and call it "Super-Employee" rating!

**Jim:** I bet you're fun in staff meetings.

**Linda:** Look, shifting the scale is treating the symptom and not the problem. If you shifted the standards like that, we would have employees who got the exceeds ratings bummed because they did not get the Super-Employee rating. The thing is...It's not about the rating...the rating system is not broke...it's fine...

**Jim:** Your ratings are broke only if employees who are meeting job standards are not giving super-service...we're getting loopy here...let me see if I can show you what I mean with some guinea pigs.

*Jim flags down the server.*

**Jim:** Can you and your manager stop by the table and speak to us about something?

**Server:** Sure – Is everything OK?

**Jim:** You're not in trouble at all. We just have a question to ask both of you.

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*Server leaves*

**John:** Did you just order guinea pigs?

**Jim:** Yes, hopefully it will work out like I plan. While they're on the way...let me keep going. The Meets Problem is not caused by the rating. It is caused by the feeling about the rating. You can make up a thousand different ratings and give them all soft and fluffy names, but if the employee is not made to feel good about the rating; The Meets Problem will still rear its head.

**John:** So what IS the solution to The Meets Problem?

**Jim:** We are! I have this saying "Celebrate MEETS."

**John:** I celebrated the meat, I told the server my chicken roast beef sandwich was good?

**Linda:** Don't ruin this moment, he's about I am about to lay a life-changing thing on you.

**John:** I'm with you.

**Jim:** Employees who are meeting job standards should be praised for doing so.

*Jim pauses for the life-changing moment to happen.*

**John:** (To Linda) OOOOKAYY.... I hate to break it to you, but I did not have a life changing experience - I still feel the same as I did a minute ago.

**Jim:** Hang in there...it'll come...let's talk about the guinea pigs we have coming: With the exception of the sarcastic remark you made about the soda glass, I notice that you have been very nice to the server – thanking him every time they filled your drink up, and complimenting them on your food.

**John:** Yes. And?

**Jim:** We got exactly what we ordered; and while the service was prompt, it was not unusually fast; the food was good, but not extraordinary. Why be so complimentary of service that is exactly what we ordered? I didn't get more shrimp or free dessert, and neither did you.

**John:** I know you're not serious.

**Jim:** Let me establish something before continuing - if you were going to rate this restaurant on the service experience; what rating WOULD you give it? Needs Improvement, Meets Your Standards, or exceeds your standards?

**John:** I would say it meets my standards.

**Jim:** But you're a happy customer right? Even though the service just meets your standards?

**John:** Yes. Very happy. Everything was great.

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**Jim:** We're both happy about this restaurant experience even though all it did was MEET our expectations. And for meeting our expectations, not exceeding them, you've sat there and praised the server every time he came around! Then why aren't there more pats on the back and ataboys for our employees who are meeting standards?

**John:** (*Wide-eyed...he's getting it*) Right. Yeah! There seems to be this undercurrent of disappointment - FROM management - if standards are not exceeded!

**Jim:** YES!, the elephant in the room is that undercurrent of disappointment flowing from management when standards have not been exceeded. Well put. I, the customer, am not upset because I didn't get extra food; I didn't order extra food. This restaurant MET my requirements –

to be fast friendly and tasty. That makes me a happy customer. Again, we're not upset with this restaurant because we didn't get EXTRA food. Nor are we disappointed that the service was not speedier. We are happy – satisfied customers.

**Linda:** Why should employees, who are making customers happy, feel substandard? We should be Celebrating Meets!

**John:** By golly, I think I just had a bona fide paradigm shift!!!

**Jim:** Don't get sarcastic on me now John!

**John:** I'm just being light – I'm actually serious. It's an excellent point, I'm 100% with you. All joking aside...I'm with you...thanks to you...I now see Meets Standards as a good thing, not something that is simply...unimpressive. Cool!

**Jim:** Ooooh! Let me right that down...Meeting Standards is a good thing, not something that is simply unimpressive. I'm going to use that one again!

**John:** Every time you use it you have to give me credit and send me a quarter.

**Jim:** Deal. As long as you do the same with my "Celebrate Meets" phrase?

**John:** Deal. I really get the idea, but I'm not sure about that phrase...no offense...I know what you are trying to say with it, but the term "CELEBRATE" may be a little over the top.

**Jim:** Maybe, perhaps, but I still think it works. I'm not saying we go around throwing a party every time an employee provides good customer service, or wave pom poms as they clock in for work on time, but we can certainly praise employees for meeting standards during a one-one-one.

**John:** I'm with you.

**Jim:** Right. Here come the test subjects...I really don't need them now; you've got my point; but let's just do this as an experiment.... *Fade to Next Scene*

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*Asad, and the manager approach.*

**Restaurant Manager:** Hi, Asad tells me you wanted to speak to us both; is everything OK?

**Jim:** Yes, actually everything is great. My name is Jim, and this is John; we've been having a discussion on the topic of employee performance

**Jim:** Sorry Linda. We've been having a discussion on the topic of employee performance, and we would like to ask the two of you a few questions. Is that OK?

**Restaurant Manager:** Sure.

**Jim:** Thanks- OK, the first question we have is for you (**to the server**). John and I have assessed your service today using the following ratings: Needs Improvement, Meets our standards, and Exceeds our standards. And we both agree on a rating. Would you like to know what it is?

**Server:** Yes.

**Jim:** Meets. You have met our standards. How do you feel about that rating?

**Server:** Met them? You mean I wasn't the best server you've ever had?

**Jim:** The Meets Problem!!!!!! On the first pitch!!!!

**Server:** What are you talking about?

**John:** Just like all of us, you were disappointed because I rated you as meeting service standards, not exceeding them.

**Server:** Well, I like to think of myself as better than average. It is a little disappointing to hear that you thought the service was just average.

**John:** We didn't say average. Your rating was Meets Standards – you provided great service.

**Server:** But isn't great service better than average?

**John:** Remember, we are not using the word average, average is a calculation, not a rating – we are saying your service meets our service standards, it did not exceed our standards; it fulfilled them; it met them.

**Server:** OK, but again, you said my service was great – wouldn't that indicate that I exceeded your expectations?

**John:** No. I expect great service from a server. (**looking to Jim**) Good so far?

**Jim:** Yup – you're nailing it.

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**Server:** I think I'm with you ...but here's a question: If great service meets your expectations, how then, could I have exceeded your expectations.

**John:** Well my friend here would have like a free refill on his salmon, and Linda and I I would have like to have had a free desert.

**Server:** I would love to be able to do that, it would certainly earn me better tips, but if I went around giving away free salmon and cheesecake, I would lose my job like THAT! (snaps fingers).

**Restaurant Manager:** He's right.

**John:** Dang!

**Linda:** It really wouldn't matter anyway. Let's say you DID start giving away refills on salmon and free cheesecake; after a few visits, we would EXPECT those things, and the free things that may have impressed us the first time, have now become what we expect...so in a customer's eyes, sustaining an exceeds rating is very difficult – exceeds becomes meets very quickly.

**John:** And you have studies to back that up, right doctor?

**Jim:** If we can, let's go back to the rating we gave you; in a word, how do you feel about your rating of meets?

**Server:** In a word – disappointed.

**Jim:** Thanks! OK, (to the manager). Can you tell your server what you think about the rating.

**Restaurant Manager:** I would say good job, and let's see how we can do better next time to ensure that we exceed your expectations.

**John:** The undercurrent of disappointment! Dang! You're throwing strikes today!

**Restaurant Manager:** What is he talking about?

**Jim:** (to server) Can we speak to your manager alone now? Again you've done a great job! And thanks for humoring our discussion...you've been a big help.

**Server:** Sure. This was weird.

*Server walks away*

**Jim:** We've been talking about the problem of employees being dissatisfied with Meets ratings, and how the way a manager feels about meets ratings carries directly over to the way the employee will feel about getting that rating. Let me ask you another question.

*Jim invites the manager to sit with them – she sits down at the table.*

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**Jim:** Do you think that employee walked away feeling good about the service he provided? Do you think he has a sense of achievement?

**Restaurant Manager:** Yes, I told him that that he did a good job.

**John:** Then what?

**Restaurant Manager:** Then what what?

**John:** What did you say after good job?

**Restaurant Manager:** Let's see if we can do better – I was trying to be motivational – I believe in pushing my team to excellence.

**Jim:** That's great; however, you should let "GOOD JOB" sink in a while before you tell them to do better. A "Good Job" followed by an immediate "Do Better," screams "I'm not satisfied." That may not be what you MEAN, but that is what employees hear.

**Restaurant Manager:** But I want you to be impressed with our service, and I want our servers to serve to impress every time.

**John:** We were impressed! We were impressed with the fast, friendly, service provided by Asad. You're caught up in the fact that his service didn't WOW Us.

**Jim:** Wowing is a good thing to shoot for – But meets is a good thing too, not something that is simply unimpressive.

**Linda:** Now that sounds familiar – you owe John a royalty.

**Jim:** You've lost focus of what a "Meets Standards" really means. Meets standards indicates that the server was fast, friendly, got our orders were right, and the food was good!

**John:** Think about what that means to the restaurant. It means that we will be back. It means that your restaurant has a good reputation with us. Therefore, don't be unimpressed with a meets rating - you should celebrate meets.

**Linda:** I can see that you had your life-changing experience.

**John:** It happened a moment ago, but I was too embarrassed to say anything.

*Restaurant Manager stands up.*

**Restaurant Manager:** So if I had been thrilled with your MEETS rating, the server would have also have been thrilled with the rating?

**Jim:** Thrilled?? That may be pushing it, but would he/she have walked away from it with a sense of achievement? Yes, definitely, yes.

**Restaurant Manager:** Hmmmm. Lunch is on me guys. Wow. This is humbling. This is enlightening! If you'll excuse me, I'm going to try to correct my mistake.

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**Jim:** Hey, another life-changing experience!

**John:** And free lunch!

**Restaurant Manager:** You've exceeded my expectation of customers, so not only is the lunch on me – I'll have Asad bring out a couple of free deserts as well.

**John:** Well hot dog and a bottle of pop!

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## **Graphic**

FOR DISCUSSION...

## **Graphic**

For the team you lead, is there a difference between employee performance that meets JOB standards, and what meets YOUR Standards?

## **Graphic**

For the team you lead, is there a difference between employee performance that meets JOB Standards and what meets CUSTOMER Standards?

## **Graphic**

Praising employees for meeting standards? Wouldn't that be encouraging mediocre performance?

## **Graphic**

So what about the employees that EXCEED Job Standards? Do we stop giving them special recognition in fear of making the "meets people" feel inferior?

## **Graphic**

How can you address the meets problem at the team level?

## **Graphic**

How can you address the meets problem at the individual level?