

### The Bowling Game

The Division Chief for Child and Family Health was frustrated that her employees had no energy; did their work with minimal effort, engagement and ownership; and were failing to reach any of the program's performance goals. So the Chief hired a consultant to assess the situation.

After a week, the consultant came back to the Chief and asked, "Do you know that your workers go bowling after work?" The Chief said "No, I had no idea. I don't concern myself with what my employees do after work hours." The consultant said, "Let's go see them."

At the bowling alley, the Chief observed that her employees had lots of energy and enthusiasm. She did not even recognize these as the same people who were in the office earlier in the day.

The consultant said: "Let's put a curtain in front of the pins, so the bowlers can't see the pins fall and don't know the score." The curtain went up, and immediately the energy level of the bowlers dropped.

*Learning points: Do your workers know the score? Do they know what they are working for, and are they able to keep measure of their personal performance and well as the accomplishments of the team?*

Next, the consultant said, "Let's have one of your Program Managers be the coach." The employees agreed to this. The first employee rolled the ball down the alley and hit eight of the ten pins. The Program Manager immediately shouted, "You missed two!"

*Learning points: Do we look at accomplishments and encourage our employees so that they believe that they can perform better? Or do we focus on errors and penalties, so that employees will hesitate to be creative for fear of making mistakes?*

**Source:** Ben Lozare and Henry Mosley, *Strategic Leadership And Management For Population And Reproductive Health: Guide for Facilitators*, Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, 2004.