

THE NOUR GROUP, INC.

MARCH 2007 – RELATIONSHIP ECONOMICS® [NEWSLETTER](#)

Excuse Me, Is This Rehab?

By Alan Weiss, PhD

A six-term Senator makes awkward, insensitive, racial remarks. Where does he go? To rehab. A major city mayor has an affair with his campaign manager's wife. Where does he go? To rehab. A married state governor has a homosexual affair with an aide he has appointed to a top post. Where does he go? To rehab. A Hollywood star crashes her car into someone else's car. Where does she go? To rehab. A male, anti-gay minister is found to have had a male lover. Where does he go? To rehab (and announces that he's "cured" in just three weeks, and has returned to full-time heterosexuality).

Rehab must be a crowded place. It strikes me as a secular confessional, where all sins are absolved (and quite quickly).

We've given people an "easy out." I wonder if we're not doing the same thing organizationally. Show me a five-year plan that actually influences evaluations and rewards. Most of the time, they are changed after a year or two (especially if key people aren't making much progress against the goals). When we find a sales quota missed, we tend to accept all kinds of ex post facto excuses: The customers had a bad year, the technology changed, we didn't have the support we were promised, I'm afraid of the dark.

"Rehab" in the corporate world takes the form of unsuccessful managers being transferred or even promoted, but seldom punished, demoted, or fired. Sometimes rehab is a class on diversity training, or sensitivity training, or anger management skills. Often rehab is the loss of a perk: "Poor Jones, his performance was so terrible that they're not letting him use the corporate jet for the next month."

Rehab is a tough place.

I'm all for forgiveness and charity. But I'm also in favor of insisting on holding people accountable and demanding honesty. Work is not an Etch-a-Sketch® where you can simply shake the box and clear the screen. Rehab on the job has to be demonstrated in changed behaviors, improved performance, and consistency of actions.

Of course, there's often that tough executive rehab, where CEOs at places such as Hewlett-Packard and Home Depot get deposed, and have to make due with tens of millions in severance. That's tough duty. But no one ever said that rehab was easy, right?

We need work and performance standards that don't excuse unethical behavior and gross misconduct. We need to be able to send a message about our values by punishing miscreants. The Senator revealed some deep-seated sentiments he needs to come to grips with. The mayor is a pig. The minister is a hypocrite. The celebrity is reckless.

Can we forgive? Probably. But not too easily. Otherwise, rehab is just another toy accessory to executive ego, like a "life coach" or a private club membership.

What, you haven't been to rehab? What's wrong with you?

Alan Weiss, Ph.D. is the author of 25 books, including Million Dollar Consulting (McGraw-Hill), which appear in 7 languages. He runs the unique Million Dollar Consulting™ Colleges three times a year. You can reach him at <http://www.summitconsulting.com>, where you can also download hundreds of free articles. He was recently inducted into the Professional Speakers Hall of Fame®