

Tips & Methods When Managing Performance



Managing performance well and consistently is essential to retain your best staff, and ensure they're helping you achieve your strategic goals.

Your employees are one of your greatest assets, but also generally one of your largest expenses. To benefit from them fully, you need to ensure your team are managing performance well. High-performing employees directly impact how well your organisation achieves its goals, whether they be financial, or about hitting certain service level targets.

Equipping your managers with the tools, resources and systems they need to help their team perform well benefits your business overall.

What to consider when developing a method of managing performance

AGREEING ON A SYSTEM - Whatever method an organisation uses for managing performance, it's crucial that there is an agreed system. It doesn't matter if you use pen and paper to document your agreed performance outcomes, or a sophisticated piece of software that allows you to record daily comments, the key is to have a system that you apply consistently so that everyone has the same opportunities to give and receive feedback and know what constitutes good performance.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STAFF - The method you choose must also take into account the demographic of your staff, and what that means in terms of how and when they want to receive feedback. Millennials are used to having information at their fingertips and getting feedback immediately. An annual performance review is not going to work if your staff body is young, because they

don't want to wait months to talk about how they're doing. Regular feedback is crucial. Your method of performance management should inspire and motivate your team to do the best they can - so make sure it reflects their needs as much as yours.

HELPING YOUR MANAGERS - Millennial workforce or not, regular reviews also help the manager. A colleague managing a team of 10 people is going to have a hard time dealing with performance reviews and the associated paperwork if they have to deal with lengthy meetings with everyone in their department at once - as in an annual review system. Regular conversations take the pressure off managers and give them the practice they need to have these conversations naturally. The more confident your management team are in holding these meetings, the more effective their feedback will be.

Tips for effective performance management

GIVE TIMELY FEEDBACK - It's no good telling someone about something they did six months ago. Feedback is much more effective when it's about a recent occurrence, as the event is fresh in everyone's mind and can be analysed properly.

OFFER OPEN AND HONEST CONVERSATIONS - Both parties should feel they can be open and honest, within a professional context. Even if the topic is difficult, make sure you are prepared and have considered all the options. Nobody benefits from having half the facts and the issue not being fully resolved if it's not communicated.

ENCOURAGE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS - Performance management isn't only about the manager telling the employee how they see things. It should always be a two-way conversation, where the employee describes their perception of their performance to the manager.

PROPERLY PLAN DISCUSSION POINTS - Regular performance reviews should still be scheduled in advance so that both parties have the opportunity to note down some key points for discussion. It's important to note issues that must be addressed, as well as the things you want to commend the employee for.

TALK ABOUT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES - Performance management is about developing the employee's worth, skills and opportunities as much as talking about the past. Look at what development opportunities are open to them as you discuss their performance to date, and set their future targets.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON THE EXISTING JOB ROLE - Performance conversations should never focus on the manager, and shouldn't present any surprises to the employee. Meetings cannot be about new responsibilities or KPIs that the employee didn't know they had, and definitely shouldn't be the first time they hear they aren't achieving to the standard required.

Improving performance management from the top down

Individual managers will naturally approach performance management differently, with some devoting a significant amount of time, while others see it as a chore. Similarly, some managers will take extensive notes which are filed and maintained properly, while others will leave almost no record of their formal meetings.

For consistency, it's important that the system used for performance management comes from the top down. All employees deserve to receive the same level of interaction when it comes to their performance, and an overarching approach ensures that this happens. It also supports a fair system of goal setting and measuring achievement.

As part of a commitment to fair performance management, organisations should ensure their managers have adequate training in giving effective feedback, coaching individuals for success and having difficult conversations.

Managing good performance is about encouragement, motivation, continuous feedback and stretching your team to the best of their ability.

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