



Performance Management according to Wikipedia 'ensures that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner'.

So, as leaders of companies and organisations - how can we ensure this is done properly? Is there a way to resource team members, to ensure objectives are met for all concerned? What steps need to be taken to maximise the 'buy in' needed from both Team Leaders and Team Members?

All of these questions and more will be addressed within this article, but first we need to ascertain where we sit regarding our own style of managing performance. Some useful points to consider are:

- What /if any, plan is in place regarding performance management?
- What follow up is currently being done regarding this?
- What are the overall objectives regarding performance management?
- Who is tracking these?
- What are the procedures in place if underperformance is present?
- What are the consequences if this persists?
- Who is performance managing the Team Leaders?

If you answers ranged from none to don't know - chances are underperformance is an issue at your workplace! To feel respected and valued at work, people need systems which involve goal setting, steps to achieve the goal and natural/logical consequences if they aren't being met! People like structure, sameness, boundaries and accountability. By creating a situation where there is either no comeback, or a 'loose' style of feedback – you are not giving them any of this. Equally important is acknowledging that one size does not fit all. People are individuals with problems and issues that may inhibit top performance at times. Emotionally intelligent leaders recognise this and make allowances for it by providing help and encouragement where appropriate. They are adept at analysing situations and responding in an appropriate and professional manner. Alongside holding high expectations for team members, they emanate good communication skills and genuine interest in people's welfare. In a nutshell - successful Performance Management is simple; it's about considered and emotionally intelligent communication, clear expectations and regular follow up.

The ideas listed below are useful when reviewing performance with a team member:

- Discuss and agree the desired standard of performance
- Find out what the person would like to achieve.
- Ask open ended questions rather than assuming anything.
- Discuss alternative ways of dealing with a situation, asking for their ideas and suggestions.

Then consider the following as a framework for ongoing performance management:

- a. What action needs to be taken?
- b. How will it be achieved?
- c. What is the timeframe for this?
- d. What resources are required?
- e. What is the agreed process?
- f. How will the success of this be measured?
- g. When will this be reviewed?
- h. What times/days work best for on-going and regular meetings?

What if in spite of the agreed plan, there seems to be a lack of achievement re: a team member's performance? It is important to deal with the specific situation as soon as possible after the event. Of note, it is preferable to discuss behaviours and what actually happened rather than individuals and their personalities. Try to keep an open mind, and ask open ended questions, as you are much more likely to garner a truthful response this way. Listen to how things are stated, as well as the words used, as this is valuable in assessing personal accountability. Finally, make sure you have identified the real cause of the problem, so that you can start to resolve it. A good way to begin this process is to reflect what you have heard and check it is accurate.

When Managing Underperformance

- Deal with the situation as soon as possible after the event.
- Discuss behaviours and what is/isn't happening.
- Establish the root cause of the problem (if possible) and check for understanding.
- Build on their thinking whenever possible, by:
- Develop a solution using their ideas, and not imposing your own solution, unless necessary.
- Check for understanding and summarise, then get agreement on this.
- Diary a time to review.
- Diary further regular meetings at this time.

One of the most important things you can do to manage underperformance is to follow up. So often this is neglected, because the problem is not prioritised or it is difficult to find the time to meet. The issue is that underperformance will continue if it is allowed to flourish. In other words, you are much less likely to see underperformance if you have a plan, have regular meetings to discuss implementation of the plan and then follow up.

Don't leave things to chance as too often this is why productivity will lessen and profit margins decline. A good analogy would be – imagine the consequences of leaving the milk out on the bench? It would get warm and start to taste funny. If you didn't put it back in the fridge, the next day it would probably be undrinkable. What a waste! Now, imagine if you were to get into the habit of putting it into the fridge, each time you used it, so it was at a perfect temperature when you next wanted a coffee! The bottle would probably last until it was finished, so there would be no waste at all.

Translate that behaviour into performance management processes. Leave it, and it won't be okay. Keep checking it; having those regular meetings and watch the performance develop further.

Please contact us if you would like the workshop outline on this topic