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Managing Performance



The performance appraisal process is an invaluable tool for developing and supporting employees and achieving high productivity and team success.

As leaders you must manage performance of your team, yourself, the accomplishment of business objectives, and the successful delivery of products and services that your customers expect. However, if you do not have focused and productive workers, you will likely fail.

Performance Appraisal Process

The ideal performance appraisal process provides leaders with a methodology to align employee and team goals with the work unit's business goals. It allows them to provide ongoing feedback to employees on their performance, obtain feedback from the employees on how they see their performance, design ways to improve work performance, develop training and career development plans. It also provides an auditable trail of performance data.

Most employees want to know how they are doing on the job. Criticisms a usually directed at the performance appraisal process, not the fact that it exists.

A good appraisal process contains regular activities and interactions throughout the year. It begins with input of customer requirements, business goals and project requirements. These lead into the setting of team goals, ideally done with the team, and then, the leader sits with each employee to establish individual performance goals that fall out of these. Once the goals are agreed upon and set, then the leader and employee create action plans, including performance measures, to achieve the goals. As these plans are implemented, there is regular feedback and coaching as required. Records are kept. Goals and action plans may be adjusted according to changing needs or business needs. There should be ongoing review and interaction over the course of the appraisal year.

Leader's Responsibilities

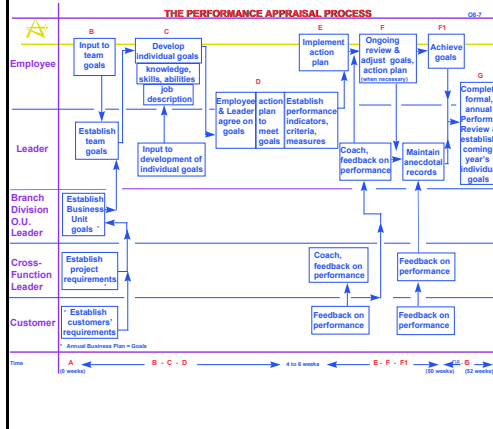
Some of the leader's responsibilities in the process are:

- know each employee's level of ability, skills and experience
- hold a team planning meeting with all
- interpret the work unit's goals so that the employees can relate to them and design individual goals
- work to reach agreement with employees on goals, action plans and performance measures
- be flexible if goals need to change
- provide coaching and feedback on a regular basis

Employee's Responsibilities

Some of the employee's responsibilities:

- contribute to team planning
- work to reach agreement with leader on goals and measures
- periodically assess own performance using the agreed upon measures
- request coaching when necessary
- prepare and discuss with leader achievements, areas for improvement, etc.



- clarify what is said to ensure clear understanding of comments

Goal Setting

A GOAL is what you want to accomplish, with the level of performance to be achieved specified by a performance standard. All goals should be:



GOALS

- Simple
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timely



They should also be challenging and tied to work unit goals.

Action Planning

Goal setting is not complete until action plans have been made that map out how and when the goal will be achieved. The degree of specificity will vary, depending on the size and nature of the goal, the employee, where they work and what they do.

Action plans can be quite detailed and include a list of actions in sequence, timing, dates for the action to be completed, resources required, and who will be involved, or, they can be more relaxed and less formal, depending on the situation and needs.

In performance management, goals and action plans are individually focused. They should fall out of a larger work unit goal. The Planning For Results process, taught in MFR Unit 4, is an excellent process for setting team goals and action plans. After participating in this, individuals can more easily identify their individual responsibilities in relation to the overall work to be done, and their corresponding deliverables.

Thus, it naturally leads into creation of individual goals and action plans.

It is important for the leader to work with the employee on their goals and action plans. The leader must commit to providing the necessary resources and support, and acting as coach along the way.

Coaching and Feedback

Coaching is a key skill for leaders. The amount of time and style of coaching will vary with the knowledge and skill level of the employee, their motivation with regard to completing the goals set, and the complexity of the environment. This was outlined in MFR Unit 1.

At times, you will have to meet with employees who are having difficulty meeting their goals. The focus of this coaching meeting will be problem solving and finding what can be done to help improve performance.



The Coaching Meeting



Foundation: Building a Relationship of Mutual Trust through Support and Self-Disclosure 08-11

Before the coaching meeting can be held, it is necessary to build a foundation of trust. The manner in which you conduct the meeting will directly affect the degree of trust and the future relationship with the employee.

Performance Improvement

The goal of a coaching meeting is to improve performance. Key to a

successful coaching meeting are the following skills:

- making the purpose clear;
- focusing on specific examples of the problem behavior, not the person,
- drawing out the consequences of actions with the employee,
- exploring alternatives together,
- acknowledging the employee's suggestions for improvement and expanding upon them,
- questioning and listening skills,
- providing sincere support,
- empathy and summarizing.

After a coaching meeting, it is important to follow up on everything that has been agreed to. If there are any problems, deal with them as soon as possible. Always discuss problems in private. Stay calm. Remain aware of the employee's needs and guard their self-esteem. Ask for their input on what the issue is and how to resolve it. Develop an action plan together, and follow up on it! Meet as often as is necessary. Do what you can to ensure that the employee sees this effort as a positive experience, as all learning should be. All mistakes are opportunities for learning. Capitalize on this.

An effective performance appraisal process involves ongoing interaction and coaching over the course of the year, as required. It is an important process that both leaders and employees should be committed to, one that leads to performance success.

For more information, contact organization Development and Training at your site.