

MANAGING PERFORMANCE



Performance management should be more people focused, rather than system focused, asserts Judy Newgreen, director, Priority One Training

An organisation best improves people's performance when it nurtures their sense of personal fulfilment and satisfaction. Therefore, it is critical that HR and employers collaborate to clearly align individuals to business strategies. "People must be clear about what they need to do, why they need to do it, and how their role

is that often organisations have the necessary systems and processes in place to manage their people: performance management, attraction, selection and retention, learning and development policies, and a range of people assistance programs. However, these organisations fail to gain the benefits that well-designed organisational systems and processes afford."

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contributes to the achievements of their team and the success of the organisation," Judy Newgreen, director, Priority One Training, tells us.

But in order to achieve the necessary improvements, performance management should be more people focused, rather than system focused, she insists. "My experience

Key recommendations

Newgreen suggests that HR works in partnership with management to ensure that all managers and team members are engaged in the operation of the systems and processes; a model for leadership is implemented to establish a consistent approach to managing people across the organisation; and a cultural tone that is highly supportive of people's contributions be promoted and supported through the actioning of a set of well-defined organisational values. Besides that, she adds, a model for improved communication and interpersonal skills should be adopted to support the building of relationships and the practice of open and honest feedback.

Still, there are common errors companies make with regards to performance

WHAT WILL ATTENDEES AT HR SUMMIT LEARN FROM JUDY NEWGREEN'S PRESENTATION?

"Attendees will be energised to apply practical 'people engagement' strategies and techniques within their organisation's performance management system. Drawing on my expertise and many experiences, I will discuss how to gain the commitment of management, how to link team and individual performance to organisational goals, and how to empower staff."

management, she feels. "I have recognised that the execution of performance management systems can be unnecessarily complicated and disempowering. Managers and team members complain about a lengthy, time-wasting process and question the validity and the usefulness of 'tick the box' documentation," she highlights.

Moreover, managers and team members alike are sometimes unaware of the value of their organisation's performance management system, for both the team and the individual. Also, managers often fail to

lack. It's often said that the performance appraisal should not be seen as a 'brick wall' that needs to be struggled over once or twice a year; meaning that feedback conversations should be ongoing throughout the year, not occasional. Team members should not be surprised by what their manager has to say, nor should they worry about what they themselves will say."

Biggest bugs

"Lack of recognition and appreciation of effort for a job well done is an error that most

and do not recognise the long hours their team members work. "I have suggested to managers that they introduce a regular feedback activity into their team meetings, and that they have a regular coffee and chat session with individual team members," notes Newgreen. She recommends that a review of current performance management processes can help to identify any issues of concern. "HR practitioners who undertake this course of action must communicate with managers and staff across the organisation to fully understand the problems and consult

"The fear of giving feedback most often comes from a lack of confidence in discussing performance issues, and a lack of mutual trust and respect between managers and their team members"

give performance feedback constructively, she says. "When performance feedback is given poorly, it will be de-motivating and potentially damaging to the manager and team member relationship. Managers who avoid giving feedback not only risk the inevitability of a fall in productivity levels but they also fail to develop and support their employees – and that undermines the value of managing performance."

In addition, the 'performance appraisal conversation' can elicit anxiety when a team member has little direct contact with their manager. "An organisational culture where formal conversations between managers and team members trigger fear and concern is one in which mutual trust and respect is

frustrates me," says Newgreen. It may be simply saying 'thank you'; it may be through offering informal and formal rewards. "I have noted that those organisations that constantly explore different and creative ways of recognising the efforts and achievements of their people benefit from high levels of motivation and productivity.

I know of a manager – a senior partner in a law firm – who has over the past 12 months had four out of the 12 lawyers in his practice area leave to work in other firms. In speaking to each of them it was revealed that they all felt they had put in too much work, with too little recognition and support."

Managers often admit that they do not give enough praise to their team members

to design a process specific to the needs of each area of the business."

An effective performance management system, Newgreen says, not only monitors and evaluates performance against a set of well-established goals – it is also a tool for rewarding effort, and developing and supporting professional development.

Hence, managers need to be trained in strategies to deliver feedback constructively and they need to learn how to build relationships with team members. Team members need to be trained to receive feedback constructively and be able to confidently participate in a two-way conversation with their manager. "The Johari Window is a model for communication and interpersonal skills. We begin to build relationships when we tell people about ourselves; we build trust and respect when we share our thoughts and feelings, and accept the opinion of others."

A performance management system has to be accepted by all managers and team members as part of the way the organisation works. Leadership drives it and all team members need to be empowered by it. HR need to ensure that the system suits the purpose for which has been designed, and that all managers and staff have full confidence in the system. **HRM**

SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

I have a passion for learning: my own learning and the learning of others. I know from experience that learning has to be enjoyable. People we train have fun practising and rehearsing their newly gained knowledge and skills. Seeing people genuinely excited and enthusiastic about applying practical strategies and techniques in their workplace is highly rewarding.