

# Managing Team Members

The Good, The Bad and The Okay

Karen Kirby



KAREN KIRBY

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# **MANAGING TEAM MEMBERS**

THE GOOD, THE BAD  
AND THE OKAY

Managing Team Members: The Good, The Bad and The Okay

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# CONTENTS

	<b>About the Author</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1	Overview Of Managing Team Members – The Good, The Bad and The Okay	8
1.2	Performance management: What is it? And why is it important?	9
1.3	A need to be managed	10
1.4	Performance management reviews	11
<b>2</b>	<b>You – Managing Your Own Performance</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1	Take a look at yourself	12
2.2	Personal organisation	13
2.3	Presenting ‘bad news’	14
2.4	Receiving criticism	15

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<b>3</b>	<b>The Performance Management Review Process</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1	The importance of an effective and regular review process	17
3.2	The agenda	19
3.3	Conducting the meeting	20
3.4	Confidentiality	21
3.5	Is the annual appraisal good enough?	22
3.6	All round review	23
3.7	Who should carry out performance reviews?	24
<b>4</b>	<b>Performance Measures and Record Keeping</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1	Key Measures	26
4.2	How to assess against the measure	28
4.3	Record keeping	30
<b>5</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>34</b>
5.1	What motivates?	34
5.2	Why bother to motivate?	37
5.3	So what should you do?	38
<b>6</b>	<b>The Bad – Dealing With Poor Performers</b>	<b>42</b>
6.1	Why it is important to deal with poor performance – and why we don't!	42
6.2	How to effectively deal with poor performers	44
6.3	Reasons for poor performance	46
6.4	It's all in the follow-up	47
<b>7</b>	<b>The Okay – Getting That Bit More From Average Performers</b>	<b>50</b>
7.1	Is 'satisfactory', satisfactory?	50
7.2	What does 'better' look like?	51
7.3	Why might they be 'just okay'?	52
7.4	Dealing with the okay performer	53
7.5	It's all in the follow-up	55
<b>8</b>	<b>The Good – Developing And Retaining Great Employees</b>	<b>57</b>
8.1	Spotting the good employee	57
8.2	Why do good and great employees need to be reviewed?	58
8.3	Carrying out the review	59
8.4	What can you offer good and great employees?	60

<b>9</b>	<b>Age &amp; Disability</b>	<b>62</b>
9.1	Getting old	62
9.2	Becoming disabled	64
9.3	Carrying out performance reviews	64
9.4	Legal implications	65
<b>10</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>66</b>
10.1	Performance management reviews – why bother?	66
10.2	Carrying out performance management reviews	66
10.3	What next?	67
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>68</b>
	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>69</b>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Kirby MCIPD has over 30 years' experience of working with people as a coach, trainer and HR consultant. In that time, she has developed a variety of programmes to meet the needs of businesses and institutions, as both an employee and as a freelance consultant. She has helped businesses in a wide variety of sectors to develop more effective ways of working and in building stronger teams; sharing not only her personal experience but also the experiences of the great businesses she works with.

Her specialism is to work with small and micro-businesses, but her suggested techniques can be just as effective for managers in larger organisations. Her passion is to encourage all business owners and managers to see frequent performance review (or supervision), alongside team communication, as vital for maintaining a motivated and loyal workforce.

Karen is based in the middle of the Midlands and has run an HR support service for years. In addition to ensuring her clients meet legal requirements, she works with owners and managers to consider the impact of their personal style, and to adopt procedures and techniques that look to maximise the potential of all their team.

Her company is greenshoot HR and you can find out more at [www.greenshoot.co.uk](http://www.greenshoot.co.uk)



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF MANAGING TEAM MEMBERS – THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE OKAY

Performance management should be the responsibility of all managers at all levels and the information needed to manage staff effectively is gathered via all the events in a person's employment, through robust systems and processes. This aspect is explored in my book *The Performance Management Journey*.

Effective performance management is vital to the smooth running of the team and business. If neglected, it might appear that the poor behaviour or incompetence of some is condoned and great performers may feel ignored or overlooked. If you want your business, team and individuals to develop, improve and grow, it is vital that you implement an effective system of performance review and management.

So often, managers and business owners do not carry out regular and effective performance management reviews, and then get irritated and frustrated with minor issues – leading to rash decisions and actions that may result in tribunal claims.

The objective of this book is to give you (managers and business owners) some background as to why effective performance management and review is good for business, and to give you some hints and tips on how to deal with not only poor performers (which is often the focus of a manager's attention), but also average and great performers.

This book will encourage you to review and reflect upon your current approach – both as an individual and as a company – and to look at how your approach could be improved to benefit the business (or organisation), the teams and departments and the individual employees.

I'll apologise in advance for the tone in some parts. I've assumed that if you are reading this book, you would like some support in managing your team. It's hard to predict all situations, especially when dealing with people as there is 'nowt as strange as folk'. So, you may disagree with some aspects, may not be able to try some suggestions or think 'I do that'. That's fine – what I would like this book to do is prompt thought and self-reflection. If you don't like my suggestions, hopefully, you'll grasp the spirit of what is being said and make your own choices. All I ask is that you review your team regularly.

What we won't be covering is how to carry out formal disciplinary action – although this may be the end result of your performance management activities.

Have a read, have a think and look at what you can change to better manage the performance of your team.

Just a note, if I use the word 'business', I do mean to include any organisation, including public and third-sector ones. I may also use specific gender terms, but please read it as applying to either gender. I'm not implying that men or women are any better or worse than each other.

## **1.2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS IT? AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Performance management is, quite simply, managing the performance of all staff at all levels using the range of information available to you.

It isn't a separate event, e.g. an annual appraisal, or a disciplinary hearing. It is an ongoing activity which should look to develop team members, iron out any issues and build great teams that will contribute to growing and improving the business.

Why is managing performance important? Let's state the obvious:

- Your people are the most important element in your business. If they aren't functioning properly, nothing works. Even in highly mechanised and technology- dependent industries, good people are needed to ensure the equipment works smoothly. Bad data input results in bad results.
- Your people are the face of your business and their skills, attitude, knowledge and motivation can make or break a business.
- Great employees don't come fully formed. Young employees need to learn about the job and about working; older, experienced employees bring habits and practices, some of which might be good, some might be bad. They need to learn and understand your way of working.
- Less obviously, 'leaving well alone', ignoring problems or ignoring high-flyers might not always cause a business to fail, but this approach will lead to stagnation, when you could achieve so much more.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to cover every eventuality. Some of you may have more good than bad and the likelihood is that the majority will be 'okay' team members. In order to

simplify things, I have categorised team members into ‘good’, ‘bad’ and ‘okay’. The reality is that many of your employees will be a bit of a mixture, having some irritating habits or dips in motivation whilst producing good work, e.g. the clock-watcher who stops behind for an hour to finish a task, then leaves an hour earlier the next day without asking.

### 1.3 A NEED TO BE MANAGED

People naturally want to know how they are doing. We might not always respond in a positive way to feedback – praise or criticism – but we do like to know ‘where we stand’.

At work, this means, as managers, we need to tell our staff:

- Clearly what they need to do. Showing initiative is all well and good, but people do need to know the basics and the parameters of the job. Ambiguity leads to confusion, poor work and frustration, jobs not being done or being duplicated, anger, laziness and excuses.
- The minimum standard required and, from there, how the standard can be raised – personally and as a business. If someone knows what they need to do and the standard required, ‘how’ they do it becomes less important (unless specified methods and approaches are required by law or logic).
- How what they are doing is important to the team and the business. Most of the time, if we know why we are doing something, we will do it better.
- How they can contribute to the success of the team and business through a positive attitude and great ideas.
- That they are valued, trusted and appreciated.
- When they have got it right and when they haven’t.

You might be surprised to learn that most people aren’t psychic; they can’t read your mind and don’t remember every sentence they read in handbooks and procedures (despite the fact that they have signed to say they’ve ‘read and understood’).

Communicating the points above will go a long way towards ensuring you build a great team, and they are also core to effective performance management.

## 1.4 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEWS

My book *The Performance Management Journey* looks at the various processes, systems and documents that are needed to manage people effectively and ensure good communication.

In this book, we will consider the role of regular and frequent performance management reviews in bringing together all the information from other employment activities. We'll look at how regularly they should be done, what should be included in the reviews and how they should be conducted.

Taking time to carry out performance management reviews with individuals allows you to:

- Deal with any minor issues in their performance or behaviour.
- Praise their good work.
- Find out their aspirations.
- Demonstrate that you value them – by what you say and by keeping the appointment for the review.
- Plan for the future – training, challenges, development.
- Build effective succession plans.
- Communicate (and discuss) your own plans for the team and business.

### Ask yourself –



- Do I currently carry out regular reviews?
- How often do I do reviews?
- Do I focus on the weaker team members?
- Do I put off having meetings with weaker members?
- Do all the reviews I carry out end positively?

## 2 YOU – MANAGING YOUR OWN PERFORMANCE



### 2.1 TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF

Managing people is one of the hardest things to do. We can be unpredictable, needy, selfish, co-operative, fun, great etc. Through a variety of activities – performance reviews being one – we can look to change behaviour and attitudes to build good teams that produce great businesses. There are some aspects we can't change – personality, values, innate motivations or drivers.

This is true of you, too – I am assuming you are a human and not an automaton. Before we look at reviewing our team members, let's have a closer look at YOU. After all if you can understand how to review and reflect on your own performance, you'll be much better at reviewing and encouraging reviews in others.

Whilst you cannot change your own personality, values and motivations, you can:

- work on what you need to do to understand your individual team members to get the best from them;
- become more self-aware – recognise your own needs, values and motivations;
- adopt approaches that ensure your personality complements that of other individuals rather than clashes;
- reflect on your management style.

This is a huge area and there are any number of books, videos, workshops and courses that can help you with this. You, too, will benefit from regular performance reviews, particularly with a mentor, where you not only review the measurable targets of your work but also the effectiveness of your management style. If you have no-one in your business to do this (perhaps because you are the owner-manager), you might want to consider engaging an external coach or mentor.

Getting it right with your team is crucial. It's the people within a business that make or break that business. Your task, amongst many, is to ensure your team members can do what they do well, willingly and successfully.

## 2.2 PERSONAL ORGANISATION

I know that some of you will appear to manage successfully in chaos, and that others are meticulous in keeping order and managing time. Changing poor habits can be difficult and you might not even be aware of the effect of your disorganisation because your team just accepts it and works around it. But, trust me, if you became better at time management, had structure to your paperwork and planned ahead rather than reacted to events, you would be more successful and your team more relaxed.

Being organised is vital to effective performance reviews. If you are disorganised and scatty, the review will not be effective because the individual being reviewed will think you don't take it seriously, you will miss key points, and you might even miss the meeting itself and there will be no follow-up.

However, being organised isn't necessarily about having checklists on clipboards, stop watches and pre-determined questions; it's about being ready, having a structure and being present. Here are some suggestions on how to do this:

- Diarise the review meetings for each member of your team. Remember that doing regular reviews allows you to spread them out rather than spending several days focusing on just the reviews. Make them at a mutually convenient time and schedule three or four in advance so the dates and times are (relatively) fixed, showing your commitment to the process.
- Make time beforehand to gather the information you might need for the review – past reviews, action/development plans, support, key performance indicators (KPIs), attendance records, etc. If you can, keep a note of the information as you get it ready for the next review.

- Be aware of company and team plans – what can be shared and what can't; consider how these plans fit with the individual(s).
- Prepare the venue – comfortable, with no interruptions.
- After the meeting, store the review documents – manually or electronically depending on whatever system you are using.
- Diarise follow-up – this may be just the next review, but you may need to take action in between reviews.
- Build any actions required on your part into your 'to do list' to be able to report back.

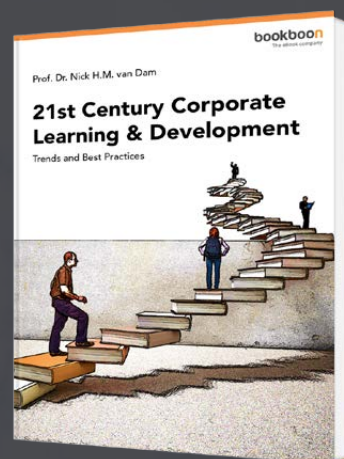
### 2.3 PRESENTING 'BAD NEWS'

It is never easy to have to give someone negative feedback or present bad news. We will talk about the 'praise sandwich' in other chapters; what I want you to consider here is the manner of the delivery and the reaction you might get.

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Don't avoid saying something that is bothering you or is an issue to be resolved. My approach is to just 'say it', but:

- Think about the words you will use to describe what is wrong, how it makes you (and the team) feel, and what the impact is on the team and the business. Even rehearse what you will say and think about the person you will be saying it to. You might need to adapt your words to suit the individual. Don't waffle, and don't be vague or try to imply. Be open, honest and direct.
- Allow time in the meeting for the individual to take on board what you are saying and give them a chance to question and discuss.
- In preparation:
  - have facts, where possible, about why there is an issue;
  - know for yourself what the required standard should be;
  - know whether the individual is actually aware of the standard, and if they have they been trained or advised on what is required;
  - think about what their possible reactions might be and prepare your response(s).
- Know your authority level – what decisions can you make about an individual's pay, hours, work, etc.
- Discuss, but don't get into an emotional argument. Stick to the facts and explore solutions; don't look for blame.
- Don't take any reaction personally. You should have given some thought to what the reaction might be, but you might be surprised. Continue to stick to the facts and act in a professional way.

## 2.4 RECEIVING CRITICISM

You should be prepared to be criticised. This won't always be the reaction, but some team members might genuinely have a problem with your approach, or something you have or haven't done, whilst others might just want to deflect the issue to someone else – and that might be you.

Hopefully, as managers, we undertake training, or at least think about how we will present negative feedback, but employees rarely have this luxury. The way they deliver any criticism of you might include personal slurs and inappropriate words. Try to see past these, accept that it is their perception (and as the marketers say 'perception is the only truth') and question them to get facts (if possible) and an understanding to enable you to recognise why they feel this and what you can do to change (if necessary).

Try not to brood and certainly don't let the criticism affect how you are with that individual. A benefit of regular reviews is that you both have an opportunity to see the impact of any follow-up actions and move forward in a positive way.



**Ask yourself –**

- What's your management style?
- Does it work for you and your team?
- How organised are you?
- Are you regularly late or unprepared?
- What can you do to improve?

# 3 THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW PROCESS

## 3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EFFECTIVE AND REGULAR REVIEW PROCESS

The ILM report *Beyond the bonus: Driving employee performance*, (2013) based on over 1000 people surveyed, recommended that employees should have regular performance reviews to provide meaningful feedback to improve performance. Interestingly the ILM research found that 69% of managers say that they always give feedback, whilst only 23% of employees agreed.

Many of us do not engage in regular reviews with our staff – why is that?

- My team members know how they are doing – they know what I think about their performance.
- Talking to individual team members on a regular basis is time-consuming and takes me away from other important tasks.
- We have regular team meetings and briefings.
- I catch up with team members every day through general office conversation.
- I talk to my team members at their annual appraisal and if they have done something wrong.

Let's look at why these just aren't good enough:

- Some team members may know how they are doing as they are quite self-aware, but others (probably the majority) will either: think they are much better than they really are; lack confidence and believe they are underperforming; or may be focusing on the wrong aspects of their work. And, actually, even those who are aware of their own level of performance and ability like to have a second opinion – from you, a person who matters in their employment.
- Yes, talking to each team member individually will require you to make time in a busy week, but the benefits to the team and business can be huge. Even those of us who schedule regular reviews with individuals cancel or postpone them if a customer or the boss calls. The message that gives to the individual is 'I don't really value you' or 'I value you less than...', which leads to a spiral of low morale and under performance. The best advice is to schedule regular reviews, make them short (maximum 30 minutes), and only cancel or postpone if it really is an emergency

that only you can deal with. If you have a large team – consider a restructure to be able to delegate this aspect of direct people-management. Just to repeat – the benefits of regular reviews to the team and business can be huge. Content, happy people give great customer service, are positive and innovative, and will increase profits and reputation.

- It is fantastic if you are a manager who has regular team meetings and briefings. They are a core part of internal communications, and keep everyone informed and on track. However, for all sorts of reasons, team meetings do not always allow or support individual contribution or development. Review meetings with individuals enable you to address personal issues and aspirations, making for a better team.
- General office chit-chat – over lunch, at the copier, coffee machine, etc. – is great for getting to know each other, but it is just that – a general conversation. Individuals will be reluctant to raise their aspirations or concerns and it is an inappropriate occasion for you to raise your concerns or to discuss your plans for that individual in that situation.
- Is an in-depth discussion once a year (with, possibly, a six-month review) good enough? A year is 365 days in which a lot can happen – positively or negatively – to the business, the team and the individual. Regular reviews will enable you to pick up on these events and changes, and act accordingly.
- And as for only speaking to someone when they have done something wrong; this makes you the bad guy. It makes them suspicious of any interaction with you as the only private conversation they have with you is about something they have done wrong. Having meetings that include positive items as well as negative items is much better for both of you, and much more likely to result in any required changes being made.

### **So, why am I advocating a regular performance review process?**

Quite simply, it works. I'm choosing to call it a 'performance management review', but in reality you can call it what you like – performance review, supervision or development review. The important bit is to schedule these reviews on a regular and frequent basis – put them in the diary – and record them (see Chapter 4).

By having regular reviews, any underperformance is dealt with swiftly and informally; it being discussed openly as soon as it is noted, and not ignored, condoned or allowed to escalate. Any action plan to improve is followed up within a short period of time, as part of the regular review schedule, and positive change praised or further action agreed if the issue persists.

By having regular reviews, good performance is recognised, leading to a feeling of well-being, and furthers the development of that individual through challenges and identifies them for promotion. This will enable great things to happen more regularly because it is at the forefront of everyone's mind.

If we only talk about aspirations once a year, change for the team or the individual can be slow. Conversations and plans get forgotten, which leads to a lack of trust, low morale and team members leaving.

What's regular? I'd love to encourage monthly meetings, but recognise that time flies, so how about aiming for every six weeks. Get them booked in the diary – choose a day and time that mutually suits (less likely to be cancelled) and practise good time management – don't be late and stick to the time allocated (30 minutes maximum).

The other advantage of this approach is you do not have to see all your team in the truncated 'appraisal season'. Depending on the size of your team you can see one or two people each week, which is much more manageable to fit into a busy diary.

## 3.2 THE AGENDA

Any meeting benefits hugely from preparation, structure and time for open conversation, and you will run a better review meeting if you have an agenda (even informal) and have done some preparation.

What should be in a review meeting?

- A welcome and summary of the purpose of the meeting.
- A review of the last action points if there are some. Reference should be made to notes made at the time. Start by asking them how they have got on with these action points, and then add your views and whether you have carried out your agreed actions.
- Celebrate what has gone well over the period and address any concerns from both parties. Again, give them the chance to speak first. You should have prepared the facts to support any concerns you have, or at least have considered how you will present these concerns – especially where the concern is to do with attitude, flexibility, enthusiasm, etc. (personal qualities and behaviour).
- Discuss concerns and possible solutions.
- If appropriate, ask about ideas and aspirations.
- Conclude with an action plan and agree on the date of the next review.

Go for the sandwich approach – i.e., anything negative is sandwiched between the positives. Start by noting achievements and successes, move on to things that still need improvement and end with an action or development plan; this in itself will be positive as it shows you support their commitment to change.

Stick to your agenda – the meeting should be about the person, and the agenda will help you keep the conversation on track and manage your time. My recommendation is that these should be relatively short – 30–40 minutes maximum. A tip is to say at the start of the meeting how long the meeting will be, e.g., ‘in the next half an hour, I would like to...’. Make brief notes during the meeting, at least ensuring that the key points are summarised and action points recorded, to be reviewed in future meetings.

### 3.3 CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Here are some basic guidelines for conducting performance review meetings. Essentially, they apply to each situation, whether you’re reviewing a good, a bad or an okay performer. They are repeated in each relevant chapter if you are looking for a quick reference or refresher.

#### Plan and prepare

- Clearly identify, in your own mind, what the key points of the meeting are. You need to be able to articulate these clearly to the team member in the review meeting, particularly if dealing with poor or average performance.
- Collect information from your records to be able to present the facts about their performance. You may or may not need to present this in the meeting. Be wary, too much factual evidence can feel like a ‘court’ or formal discipline, particularly when dealing with poor or average performance. At this stage, the idea is to resolve the issue informally and positively, but having the ‘evidence’ to hand, will be useful, if needed.
- Put yourself in their shoes – give some thought to what they might say by way of excuse or reason for their performance. This will prepare you for what might come up, and may also provide you with some solutions and challenges to be discussed in the meeting. **Warning!** Whilst I would encourage you to give some thought to their point of view, don’t think that by doing this you know the answer. You must still have an open conversation in the meeting.
- Prepare an agenda – write this down, so you remember to cover everything you want to discuss. It will also help you keep to time.
- If the meeting is part of a regular review schedule, the team member will be expecting to have the meeting and it should go ahead as scheduled.

## Conducting the meeting

- Find a private place. If you have an office, ensure that you have no interruptions. Other team members need to know that both you and the person you are talking to are not available. If part of a regular review schedule, everyone will be aware of this and respect your need for privacy.
- If the meeting is part of a regular review schedule – the format will be familiar to the person you are speaking to. You should pick up on any actions from last time and discuss how they addressed these; ask what has gone well over the intervening period, agreeing and adding to, where you can. This is the positive start.
- If the meeting is specifically to discuss poor performance, or an issue or particular concern, my approach would be to state right at the beginning why the meeting is being held. This makes it clear what the main topic of discussion will be.
- Once the topic is in the open, you can then give some positive input about what they do well.
- Present the issue – tell them what the problem is and how it affects you, the team and/or the business. Ask them to explain why it is happening. If dealing with a good performer, this would be the place to suggest possible challenges.
- Give them the time and space to express themselves. Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- It is at this point that it is hard to give advice, as so much depends on how they react, what they say and how you feel about their comments, ideas, reasons or excuses.
- Keep in mind that you want a positive outcome – don't get aggressive, emotional, judgemental or dominating (even if they do!) with poor performers, and don't be pushy or domineering with good and okay ones.
- Question and probe, as required, to get to the core of the poor performance. Discuss as needed.
- Agree on an action plan, which might require actions from both of you, and how and when you will be monitoring and reviewing their performance to review progress.
- Agree on the date of the next meeting. When this is will depend on the contents of the action plan. My recommendation would be no more than four to six weeks away.

## 3.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

An effective performance review process relies on having an open and honest discussion to be able to resolve issues, create opportunities for development and achieve aspirations for all involved. Open and honest discussions will only happen if the team member being reviewed feels comfortable and trusts their manager to keep the details confidential and not use anything that is said, in a negative or manipulative way.

We all expect confidentiality, but we don't always practise it. So be mindful of what you record, where you store those records and whom you tell. Where employees know or suspect that confidences get broken, any trust will disappear and your relationship with that person will break down. Good performance management relies on open communication and to have that there must be the trust of confidentiality.

There will be times when your team member says something that you feel needs to be passed on to someone else for a resolution or action. Where this is the case, you should listen to what they say, offer suggestions and look to deal with it between yourselves, and where you need to involve others, say so to gain their permission.

### **3.5 IS THE ANNUAL APPRAISAL GOOD ENOUGH?**

There is a large amount written about the annual appraisal – format, purpose, link to performance related pay, success rates, etc. – and despite many of the conclusions being that it is a flawed process, a large number of businesses and organisations still favour this approach, possibly because it's what we're used to and expect.

The advantage of an 'annual appraisal' is that it is a set event that has structure and facilitates an in-depth conversation between managers and their staff. Many bits of paper are filled in (or electronic databases), providing clear standardised records of these conversations. At its best, the annual appraisal is embedded throughout the organisation and is supported by reviews (usually six-monthly) which can determine that progress and development are on track. Where annual appraisals work well, the organisation is clear about the underlying assumptions and beliefs about what they want to achieve from the appraisal.

However, I would suggest that the 'annual appraisal' is not good enough. As mentioned before in this book, a year is a long time where a lot can happen – good and bad. My experience has been that the document from the previous appraisal is only looked at within weeks of the next appraisal meeting and is not seen as a continual process by either the team member or the manager.

Another disadvantage of the 'annual appraisal' is that some businesses, organisations and compliance bodies use the fact that there is an annual appraisal process in place to 'tick a box' to demonstrate the involvement and development of staff. At worst, appraisal documents are not reviewed to determine that development goals have been achieved; the act of just seeing completed versions is enough. This attitude towards appraisals undermines the purpose and leads to a negative attitude from all participants.

In small organisations the process can feel very formal and bureaucratic, which can put people off. And then there is the issue of timing:

- Does everyone get appraised at the same time (more or less)? This can be useful where company-wide information is needed for determining pay rises or company training plans. However, it puts a lot of pressure on already busy managers to fit them in, and can lead to meetings being postponed or even cancelled. How many people do you know that say ‘I haven’t had an appraisal for years’?
- Or do you appraise individuals based on the anniversary of when they started with the company? This may be better from a time point of view, but it doesn’t allow for collective information to be gathered. Because there isn’t a company-wide focus on appraisals, individuals can get overlooked; especially if they started during a busy time or holiday period.
- Whichever of these you carry out, postponing or missing appraisals gives the impression that you do not value the individual and that can damage what might have been quite a good relationship up to that point (although, to be fair, missing regular review appointments will have the same effect; it’s just easier to rebuild the relationship as the next review comes around much sooner).

My view is that whatever system of performance review is adopted, it needs to be about regular feedback, support and interaction on many levels, to be able to develop the individual, the team and the business. If you like the idea of an annual appraisal, develop a system that supports the annual event with regular interim reviews.

### **3.6 ALL ROUND REVIEW**

You may have come across the term 360° review or appraisal. This is a fairly complicated approach and is best suited to organisations that have a high level of trust and support.

The principle is that prior to the review meeting, information about an individual is gathered from a variety of sources – records and measures, the view of the manager, colleagues, subordinates, and even other people they liaise with, in the organisation or business. Some schemes even include feedback from external contacts – customers, suppliers or other stakeholders (540° review). The information is usually gathered via surveys, which may or may not be anonymous.

We aren't going to look at this approach in any detail here; if you are interested, there are any number of articles, books and resources on the subject. The point is that using this approach certainly provides a broader view on which to base review discussions. How we behave towards our boss can sometimes be very different from how we behave towards colleagues and subordinates, and, consequently, your boss' view of you can be very different from the view of others.

So, I'll leave that thought with you to explore further.

### 3.7 WHO SHOULD CARRY OUT PERFORMANCE REVIEWS?

The easy answer is, in my opinion, the line manager and preferably someone who has some authority to provide resources for support – time, money, help from colleagues, training, etc.



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However, if you are in control of a large team, you may need to delegate the responsibility of carrying out reviews, to team leaders or supervisors. If you do this, it is important that you:

- clearly provide information around budgets, timeframes, business plans and work parameters to allow the reviewer to make informed decisions on the solutions to any issues, and on the actions to achieve the individual's aspirations;
- allow them a degree of authority in agreeing on action plans;
- listen to them when they advocate on behalf of the individual being reviewed;
- support their decisions.

The benefits of delegating performance reviews are that the reviewer gains valuable experience in managing people (as they are often in junior management roles), the relationship between the two strengthens, it can help to prevent individuals 'going over the head' of their immediate supervisor/manager and it saves you time.

The disadvantages of delegating performance reviews are they could become just a 'how do you feel chat' as the reviewer has no authority to effect any change, the individual does not fully participate for that reason or he loses faith in the process because nothing happens.

**Ask yourself –**

- When can I start the regular review process?
- Could I blend regular reviews with an annual appraisal or ditch the annual appraisal?
- How will I introduce the concept of reviews to my team?
- What will my standard agenda look like? A template is useful, particularly one which can be adapted to the needs of individuals.
- Who will be trained to do reviews in my organisation?

## 4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RECORD KEEPING



### 4.1 KEY MEASURES

In any performance review process, it is useful (if not important) to have clearly determined the key measures within a role. But what are they for your business? You tell me.

Measures can be related to standards of performance, targets and KPIs (key performance indicators). You will know what these are in your business or organisation. If you don't, now would be a good time to identify them.

The benefit of having a measure is that it makes a conversation about performance factual; it depersonalises discussions, making them about a failure to meet the measure; and it gives a clear factual goal to aspire to. Key measures should be able to be measured by everyone – the manager, individuals and colleagues. This provides a degree of transparency. Dealing with difficult people, especially, is much easier when dealing in facts.

#### What can we measure?

Often, jobs have their own innate measures, especially in production or sales. In these cases you can determine a base line measure for acceptable performance, setting higher expectations to improve performance, and develop the individual or team.

In other jobs you might need to create the measure, ensuring it is based on information that is collected regularly and is understood by all. Measures might be:

- Output – how many items should be produced on a timescale.
- Sales – measured in volume or financial terms.
- Costs – measured as a reduction in costs, proportion of sales, etc.
- Profit – how much profit is made per job or per item/unit.
- Quality – measured as part of a quality control process or by amount of rework, returns, repairs or complaints. This is a measure that can be applied to administration work.
- Deadlines – how frequently deadlines are met or missed, e.g. submitting reports or information.
- Company standards – e.g. answer calls within so many rings, reply to e-mails within 24 hours, follow up all customer feedback or issue invoices within so many days.

In addition to job related measures, you can also review personal ones such as time-keeping and absences, and how the individual has communicated with you in relation to absences. Other data, from trackers, phone records, e-mails, CCTV, etc. can provide useful information, albeit usually when there is a problem. Remember, you need to let them know you are collecting data in this way.

### **Measuring personal attributes**

The above are all relatively easy to apply a measure to, that is both transparent and understood by all. The trick is to have good systems that are used effectively to provide up-to-date information. However, there are other things we like to discuss in performance reviews that are harder to measure objectively. These are related to personal traits and include enthusiasm, flexibility, positive attitude, general behaviour, motivation, co-operation, leadership, etc.

How do you review these personal attributes? The difficulty here, is that no matter how positively or negatively we view these in others, that view is often subjective and related to our own perspective of what that attribute should look like. It is in this area of the review meeting that we can err towards subjectivity or comparison (with ourselves or others).

In preparing for the meeting, note examples of when you believed that attribute or quality to be lacking and be able to explain why you see it that way. Your perception is valid – as is theirs. Listen to what they have to say and explore ways in which they can demonstrate a more positive aspect to that attribute. In this way, you are letting them know what good or positive looks like. If you adopt a 360° review process or include customer feedback, you may well have additional qualitative and quantitative data to back your view.

To be fair, if you want to praise someone's personal attributes, examples often come easily and are rarely challenged, e.g. 'you are often seen supporting others to do a better job', 'you regularly stay late to finish a job', 'you took control of that situation well', 'you are always full of positive good ideas in meetings'.

## 4.2 HOW TO ASSESS AGAINST THE MEASURE

In a previous life I was a qualification assessor and in determining whether someone met a standard or criteria I needed to ensure:

- The standard required was clear to me and to the student, with us both knowing what was expected.
- Validity, in that what they were doing was relevant to the standard.
- Authenticity, in that it was their work.
- The work produced was current, demonstrating they were up to date and hadn't lost any skill or knowledge over time.
- Reliability, indicating they could consistently perform at that level.
- Sufficiency of evidence to show they fully met the requirements over and over again.

Using this approach in performance reviews might help you determine the nature and value of key measures and how you will provide evidence that a standard has been met (or not). You should consider:

- Identifying the required standard for the job and the associated duties, and how that will be measured.
- The validity of what you are measuring to ensure it is relevant to the job and that individual. If you are reviewing performance against things that are out of their control, or are irrelevant to their job or development, the individual will lose faith in the process.
- It might seem an obvious one, but review **their** work in relation to the measure, and try to avoid comparison with others or measuring their performance based on the performance of others.
- Be current; look at what is being done now, not how they performed in the past. Try to avoid the 'halo or horns' effect, i.e. only seeing good in those you like, or only seeing poor performance in those you don't like or in those who have had some problems in the past. People change – they can improve or slip, so be mindful to be current.

- One of the purposes of frequent performance reviews is to ensure reliability; that staff consistently work to the required standard and even look to improve that standard over time.
- Sufficiency in a work situation perhaps links with reliability. We want our staff to work to and beyond the standard every time, and reviews are one way to encourage this to happen.

Agreeing on an action plan at the end of a review session also provides a measure in that the action will either have been achieved or not, leading to a discussion in the next review meeting. Actions are agreed upon to achieve objectives – in the case of performance reviews, those objectives are for improvement or personal development.

So, this would be a good place to mention SMART. SMART is a technique for setting objectives and attributing actions towards achieving the objectives. I'm sure you've all heard of SMART objectives, but here's a reminder, just in case:

**Specific** – be specific about what is to be achieved. 'To be more organised' is an aim, but 'to make better use of software packages and apps' becomes one of the specific objectives in achieving that aim.

**Measurable** – find the measure of success (or otherwise). This might be a specific reduction in complaints or costs, an amount or percentage of sales or profit, or (using the example above) that after a period of time those software packages or apps are in use.

**Achievable** – this relates to whether the individual has the aptitude, capacity, skills, ability and knowledge to achieve the objective and whether the business can provide the resources, e.g. 'answer the phone in three rings' is unachievable if there are two phones and only one person.

**Realistic** – is that the achievement of the objective is realistic and usually within a time frame; e.g. 'I'll become CEO in 12 months' depends on current position, qualifications, experience and ability and is probably unlikely, but 'I'll become CEO in 10 years' is more achievable as it allows time for qualifications and experience to be gained. This can also be related to the individual's own innate abilities – I can assure you, no matter how hard I train, I will never play football for England at any level!

**Timely or Time-bound** – putting a deadline on an objective helps to ground the objective. An objective without a timeframe has no urgency and just becomes 'one day'. Setting the deadline enables review dates to be planned. These can be on achievement or at significant points to determine progress and revise if necessary. Weightwatchers use this approach to monitor how their clients are progressing towards their end objective and celebrate smaller milestone achievements.

### 4.3 RECORD KEEPING

We cannot run our businesses without information and this includes carrying out effective performance reviews. And, to have good information, we need to keep good records. The more accurate, up to date and varied the information is, the easier it makes reviewing performance to gain improvement or personal development from an individual.

The trick with records is to make them as easy to update as possible, relevant to what we need, not duplicated and easy to retrieve information from. For the purpose of this book, I'm not advocating electronic or manual records, only insisting that you maintain whatever system you adopt. There is a wealth of software out there that can help, but, ultimately, it is the effectiveness of the person inputting the data that determines its effectiveness. You need to decide on the best system for your business.

Review your systems regularly to ensure that you get what you want or need to know, and that there are no duplications or gaps.

#### **What needs to be recorded?**

**Measures** – in section one of this chapter, we mentioned a number of measures that are either inherent in your business or perhaps you need to add. Many of these are already recorded as part of the business – what you might need to do is record these on an individual basis if you want to use them in personal review meetings. You should also look at the format in which the information can be retrieved and determine whether this gives you the information you need.

You could ask the individuals to input the data about their own performance against these measures. People are more inclined to record information if it later benefits them.

Measures such as time-keeping and attendance are probably already being recorded as part of payroll. You just need to be able to extract that information.

**The performance review** – details of the performance review need to be recorded. This can be as simple as a blank sheet of paper (I've used an exercise book per individual in very small businesses) where the date, time, key points raised and action plan are recorded. Or you can develop a range of forms that standardise the process and can be completed manually or electronically. There are, on the market, a number of software packages that allow individuals to upload evidence towards their objectives which can be accessed by the manager, too.

As an example, Figure 1 is a half-way house between a blank sheet and an overly complicated annual appraisal format.

The important thing is that the meeting is recorded – whether positive or negative. This allows for both parties to refer back to the meetings for evidence of no progress or to see how far they have come, and be able to celebrate achievements and consider the next step.

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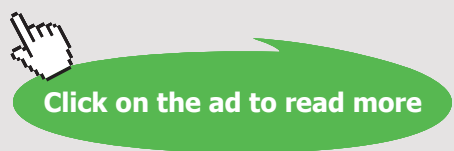
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**PERFORMANCE REVIEW FORM**

Name:	Job title/position:	Date of review:
Reviewer's name:	Position:	Review no.:
Period covered by the review	From:	To:

	Team Member	Reviewer
<b>What went well – WWW</b> List the achievements and successes that have occurred over the review period.  Thoughts on the company in general are welcome.		
<b>Even better if – EBI</b> List those activities and behaviours that would have improved performance over the review period.  Thoughts on the company in general are welcome.		

**Actions to improve/develop:**

Action:	Resources/support needed:	Review date:	Comments:

**Training/development:**

Topic:	Method:	Cost:	Completed by:

**Aspirations/ambitions:**  
(if appropriate to this discussion)

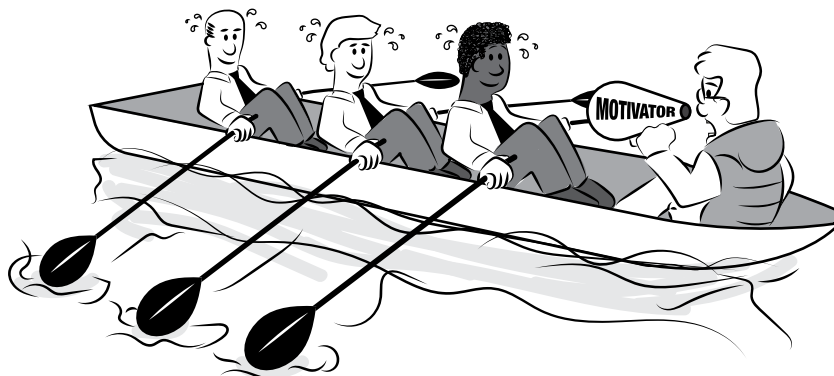
Next review date			
Signature of reviewer:		Signature of team member:	

**Figure 1** Sample performance review form

**Ask yourself –**

- What measures are currently in place?
- Are there measures for every job role?
- How will I measure personal attributes?
- Practise writing SMART objectives – for yourself to start with and then for your team.
- Challenge whether or not they are really SMART.
- What records do you currently keep?
- What records do you need to start keeping?
- How will I record performance review meetings?

## 5 MOTIVATION



### 5.1 WHAT MOTIVATES?

The subject of motivation really warrants a whole book on itself. What we hope to achieve in this chapter is to give you an understanding of what might drive a person to work harder, better and faster. Whilst there are common motivational drivers, it's useful to recognise that motivation is personal and that each person will have different drivers in different situations. Understanding this is useful in managing performance, as being able to identify an individual's main driver will help you, as their manager, to encourage and inspire them to improve and develop.

The subject of what motivates us to work harder, faster and better has been a matter of study and debate for many years, and a variety of theories have been developed, from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the 1940s to The Four Drive Model presented by Lawrence and Nohria in 2002. You might find it useful to research the range of theories and determine what fits best with your own motivation and then that of your team.

Personally, I can see merit in a number of these theories and models and I particularly like Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory as an example of intrinsic motivation, and Expectancy Theory and the Equity Theory as examples of the impact of extrinsic motivation. What you might find is that the strict application of a model or theory is difficult to apply across the team. You could say that all theories fit everyone, or that every theory has its exceptions.

**A very brief summary of my favourites:**

Extrinsic motivation factors are those influences that are outside the individual. Extrinsic motivation refers to a level of performance to attain a desired outcome. This is the opposite of intrinsic motivation, which is the drive that comes from within and is based on interest, enjoyment, curiosity, challenge and fear. Intrinsic motivation is a natural motivational tendency and therefore exists without the need for external pressures or rewards.

- **Intrinsic theories** – my favourite is Herzberg’s Motivational Theory. He suggests that the factors that motivate us at work are different from and not simply the opposite of the factors that cause dissatisfaction. What this means in essence is that there are a number of factors that dissatisfy us and that are often the reason we state for leaving a company. Herzberg calls these ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance’ factors.

Often, where these are improved, the individual is not any more motivated at work. This is because they are not the factors that motivate us to work harder, better and faster. Whilst you can’t ignore the dissatisfiers (they are the things that get us to go to work), you should look at how you can offer ways to motivate your team members from the motivating factors. These are the things that Herzberg says motivate us at work. Discuss these with your team members and explore what makes them tick, Figure 2.

True Motivators	Hygiene Needs (Dissatisfiers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achievement</li> <li>• recognition</li> <li>• work itself</li> <li>• responsibility</li> <li>• advancement inc. personal growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy</li> <li>• relationship with supervisor</li> <li>• work conditions</li> <li>• salary</li> <li>• company car</li> <li>• status</li> <li>• security</li> <li>• relationship with subordinates</li> <li>• personal life</li> </ul>

**Figure 2** Herzberg’s Theory – Motivators and Hygiene Factors

I recently took a motivational questionnaire – Motivational Maps – which was based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Edgar Schein’s Career Anchors and Enneagram, and a personality profiling tool. This resulted in identifying nine motivators that sit within three cluster groups (Figure 3). I found the report and follow-up feedback a useful tool for exploring ways in which I was motivated and how I might motivate individuals.

The Nine Motivations of Work		
Relationship Motivators	Achievement Motivators	Growth Motivators
The Defender – seeks security, predictability, stability	The Director – seeks power, influence, control of people & resources	The Creator – seeks innovation, identification with new, expressing creative potential
The Friend – seeks belonging, friendship, fulfilling relationships	The Builder – seeks money, material satisfactions, above average living	The Spirit – seeks freedom, independence, making own decisions
The Star – seeks recognition, respect, social esteem	The Expert – seeks knowledge, mastery, specialisation	The Searcher – seeks meaning, making a difference, providing worthwhile things

Figure 3 Motivational Maps – The Nine Motivations of Work

- **Extrinsic theories** – I have a couple of favourites, Adams’ Equity Theory and Vroom’s Expectancy Theory.

Adams’ Equity Theory, simply put, says we look to balance what we put into a job with what we get out. Inputs might be time, effort, skills, knowledge, flexibility, co-operation, qualifications and reputation; outputs (what an employee gets from the company) are salary, benefits, opportunities for promotion or learning, involvement, being valued, belonging, security, etc. Where an individual believes he is putting in more than he is getting out, he will adapt his behaviour accordingly – work slower, be less co-operative, take time off, complain, etc. As a manager, getting to the bottom of this is vital in motivating this individual.

Vroom’s Expectancy Theory suggests that:

- motivation comes in different strengths;
- motivation strength is determined by the perceived value of the outcome or reward;
- motivation strength is determined by the perceived probability that the behaviour will cause the outcome or reward to occur.

There is a neat calculation to be able to calculate this (Figure 4), but perhaps just ask the individuals.

<b>List 10 possible outcomes of working hard – for you and your team members</b>	
Rate these outcomes: +1 = important -1 = unimportant 0 = neutral	<b>'V' value of outcome to you</b>
Estimate the probability of attaining these outcomes: 1 = certain 0 = most unlikely 0.5 = even chance	<b>'E' expectation it will happen</b>
For each outcome multiply V x E	
Add up all your (V x E) values gives you the force of motivation. The higher the score, the higher the motivation.	<b>'F' force of your motivation</b>
<b>Sum (V x E) = F</b>	

**Figure 4** Vroom’s Expectancy Theory – Calculation

It is these types of motivation theories that have led to offering flexible benefits in the workplace to look to accommodate the personal preferences of individuals. Even if you don’t have a flexible benefit system in your business, as a manager, you can look to individually manage and provide personal motivations, e.g. personal development, control over work and environment, time off, choice of work – the list goes on.

Despite decades of study, reams of published material and motivation being a key topic on any management programme (from MBAs to in-house short courses), a recent survey of 600 managers and analysis of 12,000 diary entries by Harvard Business School professor Teresa Amabile and psychologist Steven Kramer demonstrated that 95% of managers got the answer wrong to the question ‘what is the single-most important motivator for employees at work?’ 96% of the employees they spoke to did not mention money at all. The researchers found that it was what they have called ‘The Power of Small Wins, which was not the answer from the managers. What employees talked about was ‘feeling autonomous and empowered, and a sense of belonging in their teams’. Whilst this was an American study, I would expect similar results in the UK and other Western countries.

## 5.2 WHY BOTHER TO MOTIVATE?

The purpose of motivating staff is essentially to increase productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. This might appear to be mercenary, but the reality is that if everyone works to improve the workplace, increase profits, find new markets and challenges, then everyone

benefits (not just shareholders). If employees can create and be supported in creating a 'happy' work environment, business benefits will follow.

Happy workers produce better results. Our challenge, as managers, is to identify what makes them happy. As with anything to do with humans, the answer is not simple. It will vary between individuals and within individuals themselves based on their stage of life, their relationship with you (their manager) and their perception of themselves. Happiness and motivation go hand in hand.

Business owners and managers often focus on engagement (and measures of), but Nic Marks of Happiness Works suggests that engagement is not a measure of happiness as it is more about the organisation's agenda – 'how we can get more out of you, the employee'. Employee happiness, on the other hand, is them saying 'what can you give me?' This can be as simple as people enjoying what they do, feeling connected to the business and its purpose, and being empowered to make decisions. You will not be able to enforce a happy environment; that needs to come from within the individuals. Nic Marks says 'Start with the employee, rather than the organisation. Even listening to your team for half an hour telling you whether they're happy or not and why, and doing this regularly, can have a huge impact on their satisfaction at work.' (*People Management April 2016*) This reinforces the premise of this book, in recommending that regular reviews or conversations on an individual basis will help you to manage your employees' performance, identifying how to motivate them and make them happy. Small businesses have some of the longest-serving people and the most content ones. This may be due to naturally having access to, and therefore potential influence on, the 'main man'. Talking informally every day with the decision makers in a business makes employees feel involved and empowered.

Professor Vlatka Hlupic in an article about her book *The Management Shift* says, 'It's damaging to focus on shareholder value. There's a growing body of research to show that is wrong. If you focus on process and profit at the expense of people, both your short-term and long-term profit will suffer. If you focus on people, organisational culture and relationships, together with the appropriate processes that govern how you do the work, you get sustainable long-term profitability.'

### **5.3 SO WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?**

Wow! So much to consider and it's impossible to do justice to all the theory and research in this short book.

My suggestion is to use the perceived wisdom of the theorists and researchers to underpin and inform your questions to your staff, and the actions you take. Whilst it has been stressed that we are individuals and are motivated by different things, you can identify patterns and use this to find solutions to your motivational dilemmas.

But remember to ask the individual. What do they want from the business, from their work and from the team? How can you best support them to be better? What material rewards would they value most?

# ASK!

Once you've asked, you need to act; implement the thing you've agreed will motivate – think Vroom. If the likelihood of the reward being received is low, the individual may not behave in the way you would like. Once you have given the reward, you must follow up to check if it had the desired effect.

Material rewards such as pay rises, bonuses, health benefits, holidays and the like have their place, and you should remember that these are the things that encourage us to go to work. The real motivators are often the intangible – feeling valued, having a sense of belonging, being in control of our own work and environment, being involved in decisions and personal growth. Often direct line managers can facilitate these, without the need for outside authorisation of financial requirements. Therefore, motivating staff can be relatively inexpensive. The ILM Report Beyond the bonus (2013) found that 59% employees rated job enjoyment as a top three motivator and only 13% said they were motivated by a bonus, and 'ensuring employees enjoy their job is the single most effective way to motivate them to perform.'

This is not to say that the employees get it all their own way. You are an employee, too (usually), and you have a business to maintain and grow. If individuals aren't motivated, won't engage in these conversations, won't take responsibility, or they are deliberately behaving inappropriately or are just not right for the work, then unfortunately perhaps they need to go. But by being confident that you have genuinely tried, will make their leaving feel better for both of you.

And then there is the organisational culture. To an extent, as a manager, you need to be aware of what is happening in other areas and consider if what you do fits with the culture of the organisation. But that's a whole other story.

At the time of writing this book, Leicester City FC had just become England's Premier League champions against the odds (they were 5000/1) and this was the highest position they had achieved in topflight football since coming second in Division One in the 1928–29 season. It's early days, but already there is an eagerness to discover how they managed to win the league this year; a team that had only returned to the Premier League a year earlier, after an absence of over 10 years and had spent far less on players than the usual Premier League leaders. Much of the focus is on the management team and how they managed the performance of their players. In a nutshell, it looks like Ranieri (the team manager) focused on identifying the key strengths of his players and gave them latitude to play to those strengths, building tactics around the individuals. The Leicester City success did not sustain – such is the highs and lows of sports. However, it did demonstrate that it's about a manager having as much flexibility and adaptability as he expects from his team. The message seems to be that managers in any organisation need to understand the key skills, strengths and weaknesses of their team members, and to be able to evaluate abilities informally by day-to-day contact and formally through an appraisal processes. A regular review schedule would be great for supporting this. By being flexible and adaptable, and leveraging the strength of the workforce, Ranieri in 2016 achieved a stunning result.

This Boys' Own story reinforces the point that instead of trying to do things your way or the way they have always been done, focus on team members and build your business around their strengths and motivations. A good manager fills gaps by recruiting people with those skills and strengths or training identified people – rather than cloning everyone to perform and behave exactly the same way. A good manager works with the team to make the changes (however small – marginal gains) that will improve efficiency, effectiveness and profitability.

Sport continues to be littered with such stories and in fact, there were a few more sporting stories from 2016, which demonstrate the power of motivated and committed team members. Whilst the national teams of Iceland and Wales did not win the overall UEFA European Championship and Marcus Willis did not beat possibly the greatest tennis player of all time, their performances were much better than expected. What they all showed was that you do not always need the very best or the most expensive people available, what is needed is team spirit, motivation, commitment to a common goal and loyalty. Admittedly, in sport, winning is everything but in business being number one is not the aim – sustaining and growing the business is the important factor. And a great team will help you do that.



**Ask yourself –**

- Do I know the strengths of all my team members?
- Do I look to motivate them personally, as a team or based on what I would like?
- How will I go about finding out what motivates them all individually?
- What can I facilitate within my team, department or business?

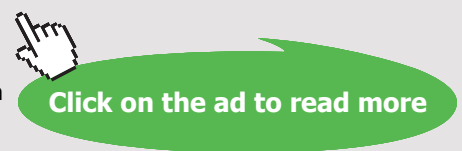
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## 6 THE BAD – DEALING WITH POOR PERFORMERS



### 6.1 WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO DEAL WITH POOR PERFORMANCE – AND WHY WE DON'T!

There might seem to be an obvious answer to the question ‘why is it important to deal with poor performance?’, but it is one we will address anyway.

To ignore poor performance or behaviour:

- Condone bad behaviour and runs the risk of others copying the same behaviour.
- Takes time away from key business activities – we become focused on the poor performance or behaviour when our minds should be working on developing the business.
- Creates poor results – bad customer service, inefficiencies, ineffectiveness and reduced productivity and profitability.
- Affects team morale – poor performance, attitude and behaviour spreads and infects the whole team.
- Increases absenteeism and staff turnover.

### **What is poor performance?**

Basically, it is anything that does not contribute to a productive, happy team; activities or skill levels that fall below standard, and affect profits and reputation. Look in any employee handbook and you will find a list, often a long one, of what constitutes misconduct (and gross misconduct), but, to clarify, here are some general areas that might be the reason you believe someone demonstrates poor performance.

- **Capability:**
  - An issue of competence; cannot or will not raise performance to the standard required.
  - Absence – regular, frequent or even long-term illness. Unfortunately, if someone cannot attend work, they will find it difficult to meet the standards for a variety of reasons.
  
- **Conduct:**
  - Behaviour and actions are such that they are causing problems in the team or to the business.
  - Time-keeping – arriving late or leaving early on breaks as well as at the start and end of the day.
  - Time-wasting – looking busy, chatting, internet surfing, etc.
  - Attitude towards work, team members or managers. A poor attitude often manifests itself in poor behaviour or an unwillingness to be flexible, embrace challenges or change, show innovation or be motivated.

Just as a reminder – in this book, we are not going to look at how to deal with formal discipline; anything considered as serious or gross misconduct should be investigated as part of formal disciplinary action. The misconduct covered here is the minor stuff that is irritating and frustrating, which, if ignored, can lead to worsening behaviour or the worst knee-jerk reaction from a manager of ‘they’ve got to go!’

It is recognised that all of the factors listed above will need thorough investigation to determine the cause of the poor performance and behaviour, and to a degree, each person should be treated individually. The point being made in this chapter is that all of these factors (irrespective of the reason) cause problems to teams and businesses, and many can be dealt with to the benefit of all through effective performance management.

### Why don't we deal with it?

We put off or ignore poor performance for all sorts of reasons, such as:

- **Time** – we are busy people and finding the time to have to speak with someone about their performance, behaviour or attitude can be difficult, and suddenly the moment has passed and our opportunity missed.
- **Not significant enough** – sometimes the issue that irritates at the time, on reflection doesn't warrant a 'chat'.
- **Scared** – well, not exactly scared, but you would rather not have to speak to an individual. This might be because you are inexperienced, nervous about how they might react or concerned you will come across as petty.

What happens when we keep putting off speaking to someone is that the behaviour appears to be condoned, it may continue and nothing changes – or it actually gets worse. You might be lucky and it's a one-off occurrence and rectifies itself, but then again it might not, so braving the conversation is worth it.

## 6.2 HOW TO EFFECTIVELY DEAL WITH POOR PERFORMERS

One of the key messages of this book is how important and effective regular and frequent reviews are in managing performance. They enable you to air the things you think are wrong (or could be better), achieve improvements in small steps, and encourage the team members to take responsibility for their own performance.

Having a schedule of one-to-one reviews avoids the need to 'have a word' or to call them into a meeting where the only topic is what they have done wrong. Team members will, eventually, see reviews as part of the normal activity of work life and accept any negative aspects more readily.

Using the positive sandwich approach (summarised in Chapter 2) the whole meeting has a positive tone, even if part of the discussion is about poor performance. Don't put off having the negative conversation – follow these steps to hold an effective meeting:

### Plan and prepare

- Clearly identify, in your own mind, what the conduct or capability issue is, and why that is a problem to the team, work and business. You need to be able to articulate this clearly to the team member in the review meeting.

- Collect evidence from your records to be able to present the facts about the poor performance. You may or may not need to present this in the meeting. Be wary, too much evidence can feel like a 'court' or formal discipline, and at this stage the idea is to resolve the issue informally and positively, but having the 'evidence' to hand will be useful, if needed.
- If it is to do with attitude or some other potentially subjective aspect, e.g. flexibility, willingness or co-operation, list those times when you have felt that they have fallen below what would be expected, so you can give examples,. Remember – this may be a subjective view (and one they may not agree with), but it is your perception and therefore is a valid view. It may even be the view of other team members – although they may wish not to be named at this stage.
- Put yourself in their shoes – give some thought to what they might say by way of excuse or reason for their underperformance. This will prepare you for what might come up and may also provide you with some solutions to be discussed in the meeting. **Warning!** Whilst I would encourage you to give some thought to their point of view, don't think that by doing this you know the answer. You must still have an open conversation in the meeting.
- Prepare an agenda – write this down, so you remember to cover everything you want to discuss.
- If part of a regular review schedule, the team member will be expecting to have the meeting and it should go ahead as scheduled.
- If you are holding the meeting to specifically deal with the issue of poor performance, arrange the meeting at a mutually convenient time, as soon as possible after the underperformance has been noted. If you delay the meeting, for whatever reason, discussing the issue can feel petty or they will not remember 'that far back'; particularly, if it is something minor, they may not even realise it was wrong.

### Conducting the meeting

- Find a private place.
- If the meeting is part of a regular review schedule, the format will be familiar to the person you are speaking to. You should pick up on any actions from last time and discuss how they addressed these; ask what has gone well over the intervening period, agreeing and adding to it, where you can. This is the positive start.
- If the meeting is specifically to discuss the poor performance, my approach would be to state right at the beginning why the meeting is being held. This makes it clear what the main topic of discussion will be.
- Once the topic is in the open, you can then give some positive input about what they do well and (perhaps) why this poor performance is out of character.

- Present the issue – tell them what the problem is and how it affects you, the team and/or the business. Ask them to explain why it is happening.
- Give them the time and space to express themselves. Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- It is at this point that it is hard to give advice, as so much depends on how they react, what they say and how you feel about their reasons or excuses.
- Keep in mind that you want a positive outcome – don't get aggressive, emotional, judgemental or dominating (even if they do!).
- Question and probe, as required, to get to the core of the poor performance. Discuss as needed.
- Agree on an action plan, which might require actions from both of you, and how and when you will be monitoring and reviewing their performance to note improvement.
- Agree on the date of the next meeting to review progress.

### 6.3 REASONS FOR POOR PERFORMANCE

In this section, we will attempt to explore some of the reasons that may be given for poor performance. You should bear in mind, that whilst you can take an educated guess based on your knowledge of the person, you need to ask and try to understand. This will help in determining the actions needed to address the problem. And they might surprise you – it might be something you just hadn't expected.

- **No reason**, it just happened. If genuine, this should be easy to deal with as the person should be keen to get back on track.
- **Other team members**. They may blame others for their underperformance, e.g. not trained, covering for another's inadequacies and lack of support. Explore this to determine whether it is true; you may need to deal with the other team members. However, you still have an issue with the person you are talking to and an action plan needs to be agreed upon, to improve their personal performance. This action plan may need support or action from you; what they need to do to deal with the other team members and what they need to do to prevent their underperformance.
- **Resources**. They may blame a lack of resources which might be something you were unaware of (because they were just getting on with it as best they could) and which you can resolve quickly.
- **You**. Be prepared for them to criticise you and your management style. Consider that they may 'have a point'; their perspective is a valid one. Discuss and consider what can be done by both of you to resolve the situation. Be aware that you can't

change a personality (yours or theirs), but you can work on ways to accommodate each other better.

- **Beyond capability.** They may recognise that they cannot do what is required. This may be a case of expecting too much too soon, and all that is needed is a bit more time to develop the skill; it maybe they are being pushed out of their comfort zone, which perhaps just needs more support and encouragement from you; or perhaps they are being asked to perform beyond their capabilities, in which case you may have to revise their job description and role in the team.
- **Personal issues.** Things are changing in their personal life – usually for the worse if someone is underperforming – and they recognise that this is affecting their work performance. A sympathetic approach is required, and, where you can, look to facilitate support e.g. re-organisation of work, time-off or outside help. You might find that the mere fact they have been able to share this with you will improve their performance. You need to be aware that some people are very private and will not disclose this type of information or expand on the details. Don't push them and always ensure confidentiality.

All of the above should have an action plan with a follow-up review. This enables you to monitor progress and note when the issue has been resolved.

## 6.4 IT'S ALL IN THE FOLLOW-UP

The trick with effective performance management, however simple or complex your systems, is to follow up. Having the conversation, particularly about poor performance, is good as it gets the issue out in the open, but if there is no follow-up all that discussion goes to waste.

Doing the reviews, dealing with the issues and following up on progress is really all a matter of personal management. Make them happen by putting them in your diary, and DO IT.

The outcome of any review meeting will be an action plan. Depending on the issue, this will include actions for the person and may include actions for you. Don't make it all about you and your support – the person needs to take responsibility, own the action plan and act accordingly.

The action plan should be challenging, achievable and should address the issue. Avoid 'aims', and set clear objectives and actions, with end dates and/or review dates (Figure 5).

Objective	Actions	Support or Resources Required	Review Date	Revised Review Date (or End Date)
To improve work rate to meet company standard within 2 months.	Undertake additional training.	Book time with A. Trainer to deliver 1-2-1 training.	1 month	2 months
	Practise skill as often as possible.	Team leader to allow time to practise skill.	1 month	2 months
	Raise any concerns with team leader.		1 month	2 months

**Figure 5** Sample Action Plan

Book the review meeting, make sure it happens and use the action plan to look at how the person is progressing with the actions agreed upon.

For some objectives and actions, e.g. around time-keeping, you might expect an instant improvement and monitor accordingly. Others, which involve training or a change of habit, may need more time to embed and the first review meeting might not be looking at whether the improvement has been achieved, but at how well the person is working towards it.

If progress is slow, the reason for this can be discussed and the action plan amended if necessary, or a more serious approach adopted to deal with poor performance.

If the result has been achieved, this can be recognised, praised and an agreement made that it won't happen again.

Where regular reviews show no (or limited) progress is being made towards the objective, the next stage may be formal disciplinary or capability action. The number of reviews to get to this stage will depend on the issue and how well the person is trying to address the problem. However, if no progress is being made, formal action must be instigated.

If you don't monitor progress and follow up with subsequent meetings, you will give the wrong message to the person and to the team. The poor performance will not be resolved, may escalate or even spread to other team members, and you may look like an ineffective manager – which is probably unfair.

**Ask yourself –**



- Do I have someone in my team who is underperforming or behaving inappropriately?
- Have I spoken to them about this?
- If not, when will I speak to them? If I did, have I followed up?
- What will my agenda look like?
  - Take this opportunity to plan how you'll address the problem, why it's important to you, what you will say and when you will have the meeting.

## 7 THE OKAY – GETTING THAT BIT MORE FROM AVERAGE PERFORMERS



### 7.1 IS 'SATISFACTORY', SATISFACTORY?

Over the years, to be identified as 'satisfactory' has become a synonym for 'not good' or 'could do better', and is seen by many as a negative. 'John, he's okay' is often said in a disappointed tone of voice, intimating that the speaker's not happy. Whilst there is some truth in this view, if someone is okay, satisfactory, doing what they need to – what's the problem? 'John, he's okay' said in an upbeat tone, suggests that he's doing fine and there is no problem.

In reality, the issue isn't that the average or satisfactory performer is doing anything wrong; it's that you'd like a bit more from them, and this bit more is often related to enthusiasm, flexibility, team spirit, etc., not always about their work (rate or quality).

But the main reason we want more from everyone is that we want our departments, businesses and organisations to grow and develop, to be able to take on new ideas, adapt to change, and expand into more and interesting work, and we want our employees to be involved and engaged.

So, I would like to start this chapter by asking – is 'satisfactory' satisfactory? I'm putting the view out there that perhaps it is.

Is your okay performer actually doing anything wrong? Is their performance, attitude or behaviour hindering the work of others or holding the department or business back? If the answer to these questions is 'no', then why push a content, competent worker? It might turn them into a poor worker, worried by the stress of apparent underperforming. Not everyone is a high-flyer, not everyone wants to be a high-flyer and people follow a variety of career paths at a variety of speeds.

Okay, or average, performers will be fulfilling their contract. They are often the ones who churn out 'core' work, on time, day in, day out. The problem with an okay performer can either be a minor irritation around some aspect of their behaviour, or it might be your problem; as their manager you may have unreasonable expectations and be comparing them unfairly with star employees or yourself.

That's not to say you should ignore these people, or assume they have no ambition or motivation. They, too, should have access to regular reviews and appraisals, where you can determine whether they do want more and where you get the opportunity to gently cajole them into a better, stronger performance.

They might be seen as plodders but they are often the ones who keep the business consistent and often support the high-flyers in achieving their aspirations.

## 7.2 WHAT DOES 'BETTER' LOOK LIKE?

Let's accept that the purpose of performance reviews is to encourage all our employees to fulfil their potential and develop themselves and the business by taking on challenges and looking to work more effectively and efficiently. Our satisfactory team members are part of that aim; we would like them to be 'better'. What does that look like? This is a subjective question, particularly as the view may be yours and not theirs.

Only you can answer the question in your business, but some suggestions are that the okay performer could:

- Be more enthusiastic – positively supporting new ideas, people and processes.
- Be more flexible – changing hours or work routines to fit in with the needs of the business on a temporary or permanent basis.
- Participate more – suggesting new ideas to improve their own work or that of the team, and provide constructive feedback.
- Take on additional responsibilities – such as taking control for aspects of the team's work, training new members of staff, and representing the team on internal committees and workgroups.

- Take on special projects that would provide challenge and interest.
- Be more motivated to finish work faster, and engage with the team.
- Be less of a clock-watcher. I'm always loathe to say this as we all have a contract to work to, but so many managers complain about the person who arrives and leaves spot on time. Be careful, they may be the ones actually doing everything required within the time allowed and the apparent 'flexible' worker who arrives early and leaves late may actually be ineffective.

To be able to talk to an okay performer about this, you need to be clear about what their current performance looks like and what you want it to look like. Think carefully about how you might express this to them. If you are able to describe a specific measure (as described in Chapter 3), even better; success can then be easily identified by both of you. If there is no specific, tangible measure, be able to describe what improvement might look like to you and discuss how they might demonstrate that.

There's a balance to be had here – they think they are (and, in fact, they are) basically okay; they are satisfactory; you just want a bit more from them. What you don't want to do is demoralise them, which might send them into a downward spin. They need to know that they are fine, but you feel they have more to offer. With this group of people, small steps might be the answer.

### 7.3 WHY MIGHT THEY BE 'JUST OKAY'?

I am sure you have your own view as to why some people are just average – never really doing anything wrong, but equally never really excelling. They turn in an okay performance, which at times you find frustrating, especially if the rest of the team seems keen to develop and improve.

Here we'll offer some suggestions, but you should remember that, whilst you can take an educated guess based on your knowledge of the person, you need to ask and try to understand. This will help you identify how to broach the subject of improving their performance and to agree on actions to make the improvement.

- **Personality.** Some people aren't destined for the limelight and are content to be in a supporting role, being solid and reliable.
- **Motivation.** They may be quite comfortable where they are, not seeing where they want to be in the near or distant future. This might be seen as lack of aspiration, but they may well have reached a level they are comfortable with at work and are just happy to do their job and go.

- **Aspiration and ambition.** Similar to ‘motivation’ in that they may be working towards personal aspirations and challenges outside of work, and that is where their mental and physical energies are being directed.
- **Reached capability.** They may have reached their personal level of capability and are actually working quite hard to be satisfactory. Any suggestions to change may be welcomed, if it takes them in a direction that they feel better suits their abilities or where effective support is provided.
- **Other team members.** You are consciously or unconsciously comparing them to better members of the team, focusing on their weaknesses and not fully appreciating the strengths they do have.
- **You.** Because of your personality or the drive of those around you, you view these people in a negative way, focusing on the negatives and not the positives of their behaviour.
- **Personal issues.** Things are changing in their personal life – for better or for worse – and they are focusing their attention on these rather than work, just doing what they need to.

Do a bit of probing – find out what’s going on in their lives, what makes them tick and what they want from their work. With this information you can start to create an action/development plan to encourage them to ‘be better’.

## 7.4 DEALING WITH THE OKAY PERFORMER

It’s been mentioned a few times that one of the key messages of this book is how important and effective regular and frequent reviews are in managing performance. The okay performer is no different. Don’t focus all your time and energy on the poor or great performers, remember to review your satisfactory ones, too; they also need to feel valued and supported.

Having regular scheduled reviews with this group is crucial. The review will enable you to air the things you think could be better, and agree how this might be achieved, whilst taking the opportunity to praise what they do well.

Use the positive sandwich approach (mentioned in Chapter 2) – for this group, particularly, you don’t want reviews to have a demoralising effect. Remember, they are not bad, they could just do better. You don’t want to turn them off. But, equally, don’t put off having the conversation if you think they could make a better contribution to the team.

## Plan and prepare

- Clearly identify, in your own mind, what aspect of their attitude, behaviour or work you'd like to see improved. Do you want them to work smarter, faster and better? Do you want them to be more enthusiastic and flexible? Do you want more participation, contribution and co-operation? Why do you believe this to be in need of improvement? Why is it a problem to the team, work and business? You need to be able to articulate this clearly to the team member in the review meeting.
- Gather information from your records to be able to present the facts (if necessary to support your concerns, without it feeling like a formal procedure) about where they currently are and, if you can, have clear measures of where you'd like them to be.
- If it is to do with attitude or some other potentially subjective aspect, e.g. flexibility, willingness or co-operation, give examples of when you have felt this may have caused you or them a problem. Remember, this may not be affecting the performance of their core duties. If it were, they would be classed as 'bad'.
- Think of things you could ask them to do that would improve participation or engagement. These might be:
  - Take on responsibility for a particular aspect of the work.
  - Undertake a special project.
  - Be the nominated trainer for the team, and all that it might involve.
  - Ask them to represent the team on internal committees, work groups, etc.
  - Avoid discussing arriving and leaving bang on time – this can be contentious. What you're main aim should be is to encourage improvement in their work and attitude during contracted hours.
- Put yourself in their shoes – give some thought to how they might respond to your comments. Remember, they will be doing what they are required to do by virtue of their contract, job description and workplace instructions. Think about how you are going to challenge any concerns you have, whilst bearing that in mind.
- Note, with examples and evidence, what they do well.
- Prepare an agenda – write this down, so you remember to cover everything you want to discuss.
- As part of a regular review schedule, the team member will be expecting to have the meeting and it should go ahead as scheduled. Having regular meetings will give you the opportunity to move them forward in small steps, and give lots of praise for what they have and continue to do well.

## Conducting the meeting

- Find a private place.
- If the meeting is part of a regular review schedule, the format will be familiar to the person you are speaking to. You should pick up on any actions from last time and discuss how they addressed these; ask what has gone well over the intervening period, agreeing and adding to it, where you can. This is the positive start.
- Explore what their aspirations and motivations are, and use this information to encourage them to be more engaged – possibly taking on new responsibilities and challenges. You might want to consider them taking these on for a trial period so they don't feel railroaded and that they have some input in the decision.
- Raise the matter of how they might improve or develop. Unlike the poor performer, where you have clear evidence of underperformance or wrongdoing, with the okay performer, raising the matter of being satisfactory will best be done subtly. Discuss your idea for taking on something new – a responsibility or challenge. Perhaps forcing someone who is naturally unsociable or negative to take on a challenge that involves more interaction with others, is not a good idea. Find something to play to their strengths and motivations, which means you need to know what their strengths and motivations are.
- Listen carefully to what they have to say in response to your ideas – what their concerns are and what support they think they'll need. If they are very resistant, perhaps leave it until the next review – at least you will have sown the seed of an idea, which they may be more responsive to next time.
- If they are willing to take on your suggestions, agree on an action plan, which will have actions for both of you, and how and when you will be monitoring and reviewing how they take this on.
- Agree on the date of the next meeting to review progress. When this is will depend on the content of the action plan. My recommendation would be no more than one month away – this assures them of your support, and allows you to see improvement (or not) and agree on further actions.

## 7.5 IT'S ALL IN THE FOLLOW-UP

It's been said before in this book, and we'll say it again – follow-up is vital. The person needs to know you're interested and supportive, and you need to see the improvement hoped for. Hopefully, with the okay performer, success is seen quickly and this feeds their motivation to take on more.

Sometimes, the outcome of the review meeting may have highlighted there was no need for a change, or the taking on of new or additional responsibilities. What it might have done was to have allowed a discussion to be had around what 'better' looks like and a degree of acceptance from you that, essentially, the member of staff is okay. Follow-up is still important to see if the team member has responded in any way or is ready for a different challenge.

**Ask yourself –**

- Do I have someone in my team who is satisfactory?
- Do I really need to make them perform better?
- What does better look like for that person?
- Is there something they could take on? What?
- What will my agenda look like?
- Take this opportunity to plan how you'll address this, why it's important to you, what you will say and when you will have the meeting.

# 8 THE GOOD – DEVELOPING AND RETAINING GREAT EMPLOYEES



## 8.1 SPOTTING THE GOOD EMPLOYEE

What do good employees look like in your team, business or organisation? What makes them great? Generally, lots of things:

- Always willing to take on a new project or challenge.
- Work flexibly – willing to work with different people, work unusual hours, stay later or come in earlier to meet deadlines.
- Manage their time and workload well.
- Have ‘time’ for work colleagues – will train, support and coach others, either informally or formally.
- The quality of their work is excellent.
- Work faster, better, smarter than others.
- Are effective and efficient.
- Rarely (or never) show the negative signs of stress. Likely to have a good work-life balance.
- Show a positive attitude.
- Recognise their weak areas and build on their strengths.
- Loyal.
- Recognise all the requirements of their job – liaising with people, getting the job done, being a team member, managing resources, etc. – and juggle the various demands well.

Your great employee(s) may not have all of these qualities; they will have some combination of the above, and more.

When you start to look a bit more closely at your team members, you may unexpectedly reveal the really good ones. They may have been hidden for a variety of reasons:

- They have never shouted about their achievements.
- They just get on with things – believing that it is their job.
- They respond to change with no fuss (which you miss because of dealing with those causing fuss).
- They perhaps caused or had a problem a while ago and that's the thing that remains on your mind ('halo or horns' effect).
- They work in an area where it is easy for others to take the credit.

Regular reviews, especially 360°, will reveal these people because you are actively looking and they have the opportunity to tell you about what they do.

## **8.2 WHY DO GOOD AND GREAT EMPLOYEES NEED TO BE REVIEWED?**

It is easy to overlook these people when it comes to performance reviews, especially if you have a number of underperformers on your team, as your time and energy is often directed at these people, along with the 'doing your job'. There are only so many working hours in a day and you might feel you do not have time to fit in reviews of the good team members, possibly even deciding they know they are great and don't need telling.

However, they are only people and, like most of us, like to know how they are doing in the eyes of others, particularly their managers. But, that aside, having a regular review with your good and great employees keeps up their morale:

- It's an opportunity to demonstrate they are valued.
- It gives them an opportunity to discuss any ideas or concerns they may have.
- It gives you the opportunity to explore their aspirations and ambitions and look to be able to facilitate those for them.
- They are not 'left out' of the review process.
- Discuss your plans for them – projects, additional responsibilities, promotion, succession plans, etc.

### 8.3 CARRYING OUT THE REVIEW

Hopefully, reviewing great performers is easy – nothing negative to have to say and nothing contentious that could be misinterpreted (as with the okay performer) – however, don't let complacency creep in. When everything is great, from your point of view, it can be tempting to relax and assume that you don't need to do any preparation for these employees. I am sure you'll have guessed that this isn't the case. You'll need to have knowledge of the business' strategic plans, action plans from previous reviews and knowledge of the individual.

Whilst you may be very pleased with the individual, they might not be very pleased with the company, other team members or you! They may continue to do a good job, because that is their nature, but they may be feeling disillusioned, frustrated, over-worked and under-valued. Missing their review or carrying it out in a complacent manner will only add to these feelings, with the risk of turning a great employee into a mediocre one and possibly losing them altogether.

#### Plan and prepare

- Consider what it is that makes them good and what continues to make them a good employee. Note any significant events or occasions when this has been demonstrated.
- If this is not the first review, ensure that any actions from previous reviews that are down to you have been fulfilled or information has been obtained as promised.
- Be aware of the business' future plans and make sure that you have considered how this employee might fit into these plans.
- Note any projects, challenges, transfers or promotions that may interest this person.
- Prepare an agenda and any information you think you might need for the meeting.

#### Conducting the meeting

- Find a private place – as mentioned in previous chapters.
- From your point of view, there is no need for a feedback sandwich as you believe everything to be good. You should always start the meeting by telling them how good you think they are. If this is part of on-going reviews, rather than effusing about how great they are, pick on one or two key achievements and why you were impressed.

- Next, allow them to speak – ask if they have any concerns, looking to deal with any disillusionment or frustrations. In looking to resolve these, don't make promises you cannot keep, but you may need to be prepared to take action or advocate on their behalf. If they have concerns, this might be enough for this particular review meeting and the next review might be when you explore their aspirations and ambitions.
- If no (or minimal) concerns, discuss their personal aims and ambitions, exploring how you might enable these to happen. Again, don't promise what you (or the business) can't deliver. What you can offer is challenge, projects, access to qualifications, etc.
- End the meeting with an action plan – when and how challenges will be started, increased targets, what will be done to resolve concerns, etc. If there isn't anything to action at a review, that's fine, but make sure that's not always the case. Try to ensure there are some actions or development points next time.

#### **8.4 WHAT CAN YOU OFFER GOOD AND GREAT EMPLOYEES?**

Depending on your position in the business, you may not feel you can offer much given that you don't have the authority to give pay rises, promotions or access to qualifications, i.e. anything that requires substantial financial resources. To maintain the motivation and interest of this group of employees, perhaps you could offer some of these:

- Additional responsibility – for some processes, systems, key aspects of the work, quality or supervision of some staff (e.g. apprentices, new starters).
- Specific team roles – team leader, on-job trainer, or team representative on company committees and work-groups.
- Delegate some of your work – as a challenge to them and to free up your time, or specifically to prepare them for promotion. This is great succession planning.
- Control of their own time and environment.
- Promotion.
- New tasks or projects, e.g. some research you have intended to do but have never done, be responsible for a team newsletter/blog or re-organisation of the office/stock room.
- If it is in your power, or you are able to lobby on their behalf:
  - Qualifications or personal development – related to the role, to a future role or just personal.
  - Pay rise, bonus or other material benefit.
  - Facilitate a sabbatical.

Whilst it is good to look to keep great employees, especially in a growing business where their knowledge can be invaluable as you develop into new markets, you may have to accept that there is nothing more you or the business can offer them, and they may leave to look to expand their own horizons elsewhere. What you want to avoid is great employees leaving due to disillusionment and frustration. If they do leave, you should be confident it is because you truly did all you could and they are in this position because of the positive impact you have had on them. It is a great achievement to be able to develop a person to realise his/her true potential – just a shame it may not be in your business.

**Ask yourself –**



- Who are your great employees?
- When was the last time you recognised their greatness?
- What do they want from their job?
- What is next for them?
- What can you offer?

## 9 AGE & DISABILITY



### 9.1 GETTING OLD

One thing I can guarantee is that we all get older each year. What I can't predict is how ageing will affect performance at work. Some of us will fare well and others won't. Even in very physical jobs, some people can continue to a relatively old age whilst others struggle with the demands on their body.

**How old is old?** Remember when you were a child – any grown-up appeared ancient when in fact they might only be 20 years old; or when you were a teenager and you assumed that your parents, who might have been in their 30s or 40s, were past it. Unfortunately, there are similar stereotypes in the work environment. Recruiters still seem reluctant to employ people over 50, assuming that they are at the end of their working life, and that someone in their mid-30s or early 40s will stay longer and have more to give. A strange assumption, really, given that based on the current state pension age in the UK, a 50 year-old has 15 years of working life left, which will increase over time. In some industries and sectors, 40 years old seems old. So be wary of falling into this stereotype trap.

With an increasing state pension age, concern over personal pension pots, better health and fitness, and a desire to be active, all of us will be working longer and the role of performance reviews is to ensure that the business gets the best from and for all of its employees.

**What happens as we get older?** All sorts of things – or perhaps nothing. Here are some of the things that can happen as we age (or so some people think!):

- Our mental capacity diminishes. We think more slowly and our memory isn't what it used to be.
- We find it difficult to learn new things, especially when it comes to technology.
- We experience a range of health issues – insomnia, digestive problems, general aches and pains, poor eye sight, poor hearing, musculoskeletal problems, diabetes, etc.
- More time off is needed for hospital appointments.
- We aren't interested in promotion or challenges at work.
- We are set in our ways.
- We are distracted by family – ageing parents or grandchildren.
- We won't be team players or be managed by a younger person.

What can also happen as we get older and arrive at 'old age' is that we:

- Will have amassed a good deal of knowledge and experience – both work and life – and we want to share this by becoming mentors, coaches, advisers and trainers.
- Often show greater empathy towards colleagues, managers and customers.
- Realise the importance of a good work-life balance, and become better at managing ourselves and our time.
- Are less likely to be 'party animals' or indulge in risky hobbies.
- Don't need time off in school holidays.

Some or all of these points may be true for some or all of us, and the only way for you to find out is to ask and observe individuals – through performance reviews, general conversation and team meetings.

For many of us, being young or old is often a state of mind, and whilst there may be physical aspects that affect how we work, many people retain a curiosity and desire to be challenged and involved. These people can be great assets as they not only have a drive to continue to develop and evolve but also bring a wealth of experience and knowledge.

The reality is that everyone should be taken on their individual merits, both in recruitment and during employment, for opportunities that arise. The older employee should not be treated any differently and should be subject to performance reviews in the same way as all members of staff; the outcome of those reviews being that the individual is encouraged to improve and is supported to continue to do a good job.

## 9.2 BECOMING DISABLED

In this book, we have been looking at how to manage the performance of our current team members. If you already have a disabled employee on your team, you will have appointed them because of their skills, knowledge and personal qualities; you will review their performance based on known criteria.

What we are considering here is how we manage the employee who becomes disabled through an accident, illness or the progression of an existing condition.

It may be possible that, in becoming disabled, the employee is no longer able to carry out the role in the same manner, to the same level or to the same intensity (which may also apply to aging). You, and they, might even find that the ‘disability’ creeps up on them and they haven’t fully understood why they can no longer do what they previously could, in the way that they did.

This is an area where regular performance reviews are particularly useful. It gives you and the individual the opportunity to:

- explore why they are finding some aspects of their work harder;
- discuss openly and honestly their concerns and situation (which should be the case with all your team members);
- look at alternative ways of doing the work or consider what alternative work they could do;
- identify the support you and the company can give – this might range from you adopting a more flexible approach through to investing in software and equipment.

Try to avoid appearing to punish them by downgrading their value to the organisation through a reduction in salary or a change in position/level.

Modern thinking is that businesses would be better to focus on people and build the team around individual strengths rather than to clone everyone to fit a traditional approach. By focusing on what the disabled employee can do (with or without support), you both benefit – you get a great team member and they get the satisfaction of doing a great job.

## 9.3 CARRYING OUT PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

In the previous chapters, The Bad, The Okay and The Good, we have looked at the structure and frequency of performance reviews, so we don’t need that detail again here. Your ageing

or disabled employee should be reviewed in the same way and, like with any other team member, the frequency of the meetings will depend on the actions agreed, any issues and aspirations and the needs of both them and the business.

There is no difference in how the discussion should proceed. If you are unhappy with any aspects of their performance, you should raise this and explore how it can change; you should also discuss their aspirations and ambitions, and how you and the business can help them achieve these.

The difference may need to be within you. How you reconcile your need for a job to be done in a particular way with how it is actually done by individuals – young, old or disabled. What you can expect from everyone is for the job to be done to a particular standard.

## 9.4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of age or disability (two of the nine protected characteristics covered by this act). By treating older or disabled employees less favourably, you may find yourself in breach of this legislation.

By failing to recognise that someone has become disabled; not making reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled employee to do the job; or not offering training, development or promotion opportunities to older or disabled workers, you may find you have directly or indirectly discriminated against these types of employees.

So don't make assumptions – talk to your team members. Find out what they can do and what they want to do. Regular performance review meetings will ensure this happens.

### Ask yourself –



- What preconceptions or stereotypes do you hold about ageing and disability?  
Do you have team members you feel are or might be in these categories?
- Are you looking at what reasonable adjustments can be made to get them back to full performance?
  - Can the work be done differently to accommodate the individual?

# 10 SUMMARY

## 10.1 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEWS – WHY BOTHER?

Effective performance management is vital to the smooth running of your team and business, and I hope this book has encouraged you to carry out regular reviews with all members of your team – the good, the bad and the okay.

The key principles of performance management are:

- Monitor performance using tools and systems that provide a measure and record.
- Know and share the vision and values of the business to ensure that everyone understands how to behave.
- Discuss performance regularly and individually with each team member. They need to know how what they do fits in with the team and the business.
- Don't make assumptions about how people feel and what they want. Ask them!
- Create action and development plans that are owned by the individual and supported by you.
- Focus on people – building on their skills, recognising their individual motivations and celebrating achievements.
- Reviews, amongst other tools, are a great way to show how you value an individual. Not only are you dedicating time to discuss 'them' but the follow-up of the action plan should be a practical demonstration of that value.

Generally, if people feel valued and are motivated and happy in their work, they will work harder, faster and better. They will be more co-operative, flexible and more accepting of change because they know they are a crucial part of the business.

There will always be the odd one or two who, for whatever reason, just don't (or won't) fit in with your business. Their values, attitude, behaviour and abilities are not right. That's when a different approach is needed – disciplinary action, perhaps. The information and outcomes of the regular review meetings will have pointed to this next stage, so it shouldn't be a shock to you or the individual.

## 10.2 CARRYING OUT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEWS

- Make it happen – set up a schedule of regular meetings.
- Record what has been discussed and, **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, agree on and record action/development plans, ensuring they are 'owned' by the individual.

- Be ready and willing to discuss concerns and issues.
- Be prepared to support the individual to achieve their aims and ambitions.
- Look for challenges and new responsibilities to develop team members to be better.
- Have a structure, but be prepared to 'go with the flow' – being flexible and open to new ways of working.

### 10.3 WHAT NEXT?

You've read the book (I hope) and have answered the 'Ask yourself' questions. Now create your own action and development plan to start the review meetings for your team.

Get prepared and give it a go. If you keep putting it off, it will never happen and you'll fall into a routine of only speaking to your team members individually when something is wrong or at the annual appraisal.

Start this new habit now. The first few meetings might be a bit longer. If you have never sat down with individuals before, they will have plenty to say. But, as the process embeds, you'll find the meetings become more efficient. They will have more structure with each of you understanding the purpose and realising that what isn't covered in one meeting will be followed up in subsequent meetings.

Reap the rewards of working with focused, motivated employees:

- Work is a happy place to be, with individuals feeling valued.
- Targets and objectives are constantly met.
- Team members come up with great ideas and respond well to change.
- Team morale is good.
- If people leave, it is for the right reasons.
- Profits and productivity improve.
- You are leading a successful team.

#### Ask yourself –



What needs to happen to get performance review meetings underway?

- What personal development do I need?
- Whom will I start with and when will I start?

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