



Performance Management Vs Performance Punishment?

by Jan Sky

A primary managerial responsibility managers have is to plan, direct and monitor the work of others to achieve the results they have been tasked to achieve. This involves informing staff about work responsibilities, setting and interpreting work performance standards and giving appropriate feedback by providing examples of work performance and behaviour.

One of the biggest causes of workplace unrest and low job satisfaction is poor performance management, especially with staff who are not performing to the required standards.

Research shows that poor performance management is one of the main contributing factors to staff absenteeism and turnover. A manager's inability to provide timely and appropriate performance feedback often results in the staff member becoming distressed, behavioural changes become apparent, affecting the staff member's performance.

Managing performance involves managing the effective work performance of staff as well as managing those challenging behaviours that affect individuals, teams and the overall performance of task achievement in the workplace.

The introduction of performance appraisals to organisations some years ago appeared to be the answer to addressing and meeting benchmarks for continuous improvement. Performance appraisals help to identify skill gaps and training needs; provide areas for praise, promotion and in some instances, a pay increase. However they are sometimes viewed as huge 'time wasters' and cause anxiety for the manager and staff member. A performance appraisal is a tool that can identify what knowledge is needed, available, missing, applied or contained.

Poor performance managers 'performance punish' their staff and create situations such as overlooking achievements; focus is on what staff are doing wrong; take credit for another's work and instil 'fear' in staff members. At times it can be simply the 'language of the message' that a manager uses, rather than 'the message' that is delivered that causes a staff member to act out poorly.

To performance manage effectively a manager needs to be in tune with the team, its members and the tasks. A manager needs a good understanding of themselves as well as others, with an awareness of their shortcomings as well as their strengths.

Most employees want to do a good job; however when they don't

know what is expected of them they can't perform at a satisfactory level. Therefore an agreement between a manager and each of their staff on what is to be done, what results are to be achieved and the priorities on the use of time is essential to successfully performance manage.

Performance management is an ongoing, continuous process where praise for work well done is given as well as feedback on work performed incorrectly or not to standard. A manager who has the skills required to consistently performance manage is gifted in the understanding of human behaviour. A manager who practises performance punishment can learn new skills to make the necessary changes to their management style and in turn reap the rewards of a high performing team.

It is true that we operate at the 'speed of life' today; we are constantly under pressure to meet deadlines, produce more in less time and with fewer staff. A manager can easily feel pressured rather than well paced. A skilled manager with excellent performance management skills is aware of the talents, strengths and weaknesses of their staff and is able to allocate tasks and activities accordingly. A smoothly running team is a well performance managed team.

Performance management includes activities to ensure goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. It focuses on the performance of the organisation, a department, processes to build a product or service, how teams function or individuals employees operate.

Performance management focuses on tasks rather than behaviour. Although behaviour impacts upon tasks, the focus should be on the task, the impact upon the team or the overall affect of goal objectives.

The easiest way to bring about change in behaviour is to focus on the positive rather than trying to change a negative.

Provide employees with opportunities to receive and give feedback regarding their performance in a positive safe environment, such as team meetings, and support those behaviours you do want. This leads to less error and waste, increased productivity, improved quality and service for customers, as well as enhanced employee motivation, commitment and a sense of ownership.

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