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## *Managing people*

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Most traditional people management systems have typically concentrated only on an annual review – the lead up to the annual review and the setting of objectives/ results for the coming 12 months. These events have a place in the overall system of managing the performance of our people, but this approach treats such snapshots (if they occur at all) as a ‘by-product’.

### **WHO IS THE APPROACH FOR?**

This system is designed to be most useful at the middle management and operational levels, especially to all the line managers within the organization. It is also for all the people (work team) who work with these managers. Employees need to know what is expected of them and how their future development will occur. The key points in this approach are:

- clearly defined expectations (at selection, recruitment and induction);
- the manager operating as a workplace coach;
- the manager providing feedback as close to any event as possible (early intervention); this must also be a two-way process;

- no surprises to an employee receiving formal feedback (off the job);
- having a common language of standards of performance and code of conduct (workplace behaviour) that individuals and groups identify with as much as managers;
- feedback should be seen as an ordinary event in a working day – just as a player is given feedback throughout a game, or an actor is given feedback by the director during the filming of a scene;
- genuine two-way feedback between the giver and receiver, which encourages improved workplace outcomes/results;
- the continuous development of each employee in line with expectations, which are continuously renewed in line with the way performance has to change and be improved.

## KEY FEATURES

Two of the main features of this approach are that the performance management system must be, a) purpose-built, and b) simple. A purpose-built approach for each organization is important in ensuring that both managers and employees feel a sense of ownership in the system – this is critical to its success. The approach must be brought to life by the involvement of all. This is a dynamic process so the 'building' must be ongoing and reviewed over time. Furthermore, the approach must also be easy to comprehend, learn and put into practice (do) and maintain. Without simplicity, implementation cannot be pursued and sustainable success is put at risk.

Figure 1.1 identifies the key features, aspects and activities of this approach. What is important is to focus immediately on the functions of:

- managing;
- people;
- performance;
- development.

These represent the drivers of this approach, and the activities which support each of these ensure it works.

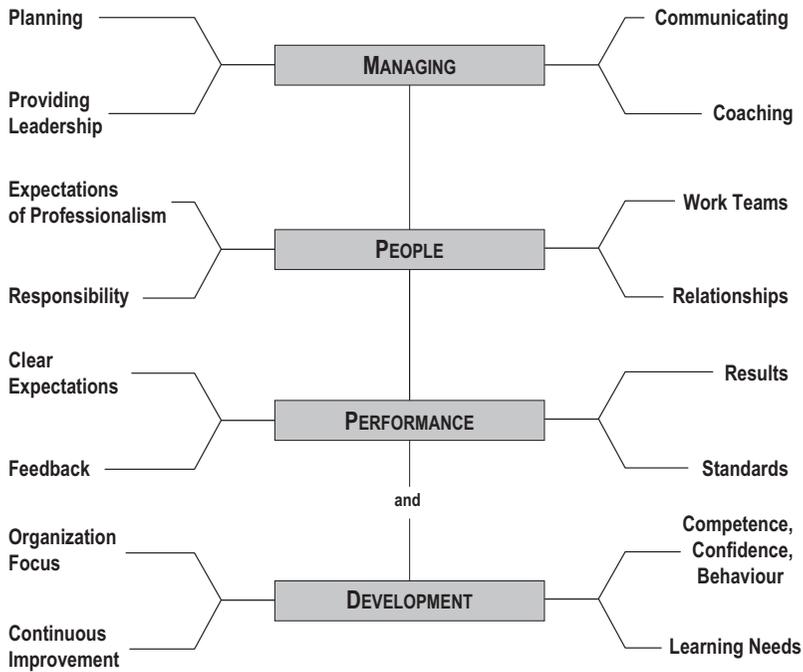


Figure 1.1 A people management approach

## Managing

There are a multitude of textbooks that describe what management is all about. In simple terms, we see it as getting things done through people and the available technology. What is required of the line manager in terms of competence is not a subject for this book, other than to identify those functions that must be carried out competently if people performance is to be managed effectively.

This function is critical as the others will succeed or fail depending on how well this approach is managed by:

- planning the people management approach with other managers and team members;
- providing leadership through commitment and role modelling;
- communicating the people management system to all those affected by it;
- coaching the work team.

It goes almost without saying: projects as complex as introducing a new people management system require careful planning. We use standard project planning techniques to set up the project plan for the introduction of our people management approach based on workplace coaching.<sup>1</sup> The plan will usually identify:

- the project team (leader/sponsor and other team members);
- clear objectives;
- outcomes/outputs;
- methodology;
- risk analysis and prevention/mitigation plans;
- timeframe/milestones;
- cost/benefit;
- evaluation strategy.

We recommend this formal approach to project planning and management as important risk prevention/mitigation strategies in themselves – it ensures all of the key players have ‘signed off’ on the process before it is launched.

There is much debate about what leadership is and we don’t propose to add to it. However, it is worth noting that effective people management is an essential aspect of strong leadership. Workplace coaching is the vehicle for exercising leadership and success will be determined by the level of commitment to the expectations (agreed or determined) and the demonstration of professionalism by the line managers (and their teams). To take an organization down this pathway and to succeed requires strong leadership and role modelling by all line managers – they must accept accountability for performance in their workplace and lead their team members through the processes to put a quality people management system in place.

The communication should not be about consulting and convincing managers and team members that people management is necessary. It is about ensuring that they become committed to this particular approach (using workplace coaching with predetermined performance standards and a code of conduct to drive excellent performance). To achieve this, the organization will need to ensure that it provides the necessary resources and training.

[Chapter 3](#) deals with coaching in considerable detail. In essence, we use the word to describe a set of interrelated activities:

- clarifying expectations in regard to results/processes and behaviour;
- providing feedback in the workplace as close to specific work events as possible (early intervention), being always vigilant for timely opportunities to give feedback;
- developing plans to improve individual or team performance and/or to recognize excellent performance (including follow-up).

## People

This aspect of our approach deals with:

- The members who make up the work team(s) in the workplace. It is their job to accept responsibility for, and succeed in achieving, the required results.
- In return they have the right to expect professionalism from the manager, coach or director who is managing their performance and development.
- People should know clearly what is expected of them and deserve to be treated with honesty, respect and dignity. People should also expect mental toughness from their manager, who operates by the courage of his or her conviction whilst upholding the principles of natural justice. These are the foundations for successful workplace teams.

These points are critical in the development of harmonious workplace relationships which encourage people to work together in a safe and enjoyable manner.

## Performance

Simply put, this means achieving the required results. Whilst many organizations try to come to grips with 'people management' (as in the number of products/services produced in a given time to a given standard) there is an absence of providing coaching and good feedback processes about individual and group conduct/behaviour.

The key element of this approach is that the two (outputs and behaviour) go hand in hand. The driving force behind success is the establishment of clear expectations about:

- the tasks that are to be performed;
- how they are to be performed (process/system);

- the standard of the outputs (results);
- the behaviour/conduct required in the workplace.

Performance is driven by:

- clear expectations of individual employees;
- the competence and confidence of employees to perform their work;
- a happy and safe work environment (quality work relations);
- job satisfaction;
- the recognition and rewards given.

Clearly then, conduct/behaviour cannot be left out or treated separately. Remember, this is not just about the elimination of bad/illegal behaviours (for example, bullying, harassment, discrimination) but about the building of good and worthwhile behaviours (respect, helping out, sharing and support for other team members). The code of conduct and coaching can guide people to support and deliver this.

## **Development**

Key result areas are determined at the strategic level of the organization. They are then translated into strategic objectives and flow down into a set of actions to be undertaken. These actions ultimately affect the performance required of people on the shop floor/workplace.

It has been our experience that most managers are not conscious of how changes in key result areas directly impact on the performance of their people. Scant attention is too often paid to the importance of individual/team development plans to deal with agreed changes and subsequent changes in expectations. This moving of the goal posts is very frustrating to people and confuses them – expectations are no longer clear. The individual/team development plan should be seen as a never-ending, continuous improvement process.

Whilst individuals have the right to pursue their own development, it is an imperative to negotiate tight connections between the focus and needs of the organization and the needs of the individual and team. In maintaining the competitive edge of each person, the competitive edge of the organization is also developed.

There is often too much emphasis placed on training needs rather than learning needs when focusing on development. Training is only one way of

learning – there are other ways and these need to be considered in line with the nature of the performance improvement required. These may include:

- mentoring;
- work shadowing (spending time with a top performer);
- job rotation;
- exchanges;
- projects.

Success in continuous improvement has a better chance when all managers and their people see lifelong learning as a necessity and ultimately the way of the future.

## **A PURPOSE-BUILT APPROACH**

This approach incorporates the functions and activities of the management team to make sure that the expectations and standards are understood and complied with across the entire work team.

It is about the design, roll-out/implementation of the people management approach in ways that ensure it becomes an integral part of the way the manager and the team think and act as they go about their daily work activities.

It is as much about developing confidence in the coaching system and an acceptance of coaching in the workplace from a conduct/behaviour point of view as it is about the actual products/services produced.

People want to enjoy their work, be excellent at what they do, and most look for recognition of their performance as a major determinant in the level of job satisfaction that they can achieve. Above all else, people want to be developed.

### **Simplicity of the approach**

Simplicity is the key: simple, straightforward and natural in that it becomes part of the everyday life and existence of the individual and teams. Just like serving a customer, making a product, or taking a break – it is part of ‘what we do around here’ every day. Good performance management becomes a habit of successful workplaces.

This approach thrives as part of everyday organizational life when there is confidence that it is:

- fair;
- consistent;
- honest;
- developed with the involvement of employees.

Giving and/or receiving positive or negative feedback should not be seen by team members as anything special or extraordinary: it is simply part of the way the organization 'does business'. It is not exceptional but part of modern work practices. The extent to which it is *positive and constructive*, and followed up by activities to address underperformance or recognize excellent performance, will determine the way feedback is perceived in the workplace.

The objective of this approach is to remove any threat or discomfort people may feel in giving or receiving feedback. Team members have a right to expect management to be committed to give this feedback in ways that are respectful to them as people, and where the feedback is dealing with underperformance then the line manager will work with team members to achieve the necessary improvement. This will need a total commitment to continuous employee development. It never ends.

In summary, this approach concentrates on the workplace events as they occur, with feedback and coaching to be provided continuously and as close to the event as possible. While there is nothing wrong with monthly, quarterly or annual reviews, they are after-the-event, historical 'by-products' of the people management system. They are not the main game. The main game is the provision of feedback and coaching to team members on a day-to-day basis as part of a normal management role.

It also works to ensure there are no surprises at some point down the track (like a monthly review) which can be very frustrating for team members. There is nothing worse than being told long after the event that your performance or behaviour was unsatisfactory.

This chapter concludes with a *caution*. The upfront requirement of management to be totally committed to the principles and practice of a people management approach is mandatory. Almost every unsuccessful people management system can be traced to inexperienced, poorly trained and uncommitted management, and a lack of good business leadership.

The approaches included in this book should be part of everyday management:

- clear expectations (both ways);
- early intervention;
- recognition of excellent performance;
- a plan to eliminate poor performance.

We now turn to [Chapter 2](#), getting you started in the development and implementation of workplace coaching, in particular the processes associated with performance standards and a code of conduct based on work expectations.

## **NOTE**

1. As consultants we become the planners, along with selected managers and employees. We apply our coaching strategy to ensure the knowledge, tools and skills are retained in the organization.