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# Managing performance

It can be a rewarding experience to lead a team when each individual is contributing to the success of the whole team. However, difficult challenges facing a line manager are poor performance and bad relationships among team members. It is sometimes easy to think that the problems will go away, but this rarely happens. This section explores the issue of staff performance. It gives guidance on identifying and dealing with poor performance, and looks at enhancing good performance.

## Bible study

The New Testament tells us a lot about Paul's relationship with Timothy:

- Paul invited Timothy to accompany him under recommendation from local Christians (Acts 16:1-5)
- Timothy continued to carry out his ministry under the guidance and instruction of Paul (Acts 17:15; 19:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:2)
- Paul calls Timothy his son (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2)
- Paul seeks to protect Timothy (1 Corinthians 16:10-11)
- Paul praises Timothy (Philippians 2:19-23)
- Paul writes two letters to Timothy

- Paul includes Timothy in the greeting in some of his letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians and Colossians)

■ *What can line managers in our organisation learn from this about how they should view and manage their staff?*

Read 1 Timothy 3:14-15; 4:11-16; 5:21-22; 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:8-12 and 2:14-16.

- *What can we learn from these letters that Paul wrote to Timothy in terms of:*
- *Setting tasks, instructing, educating and explaining?*
  - *Praising and encouraging?*
  - *Giving responsibility?*

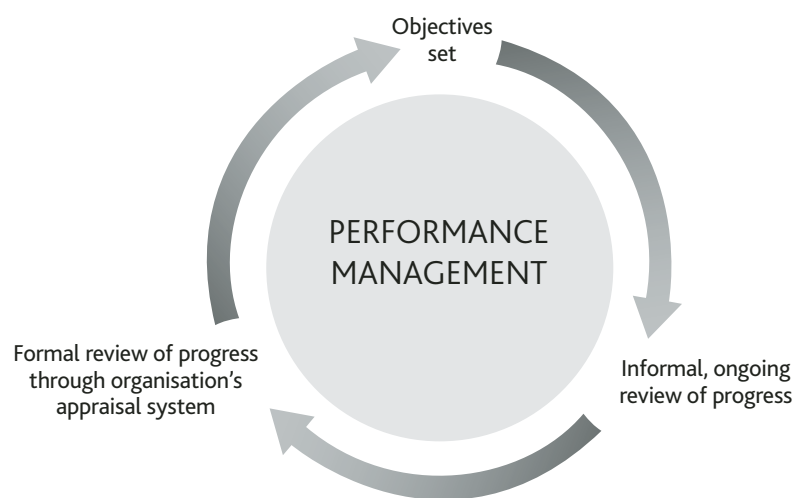
## Performance management

Performance management is the process of looking both to the future and to the past with a member of staff. The process involves:

- **Setting clear, agreed objectives.** Too often conflict occurs because the line manager assumes that the staff member knows what to do. The staff member is surprised when they discover that the expectations from their line manager were different from their own. Job descriptions and tasks must be clear and agreed by both the line manager and the member of staff.
- **Assessing and evaluating performance against those objectives.** A person's performance in their job is observed by their line manager. What they do should directly relate to what was asked of them – the objectives.

- **Providing feedback on performance.** Feedback is about telling someone how well they are doing their job. When performance is poor, this is both the hardest and the most important part of performance management. Sometimes a person can be unaware that their behaviour is a concern to others, or that they are not achieving what is expected of them in terms of quantity or quality.
- **Planning, prioritising and agreeing the way forward.** Every six months or year, it is helpful to reassess the objectives for the next year. Some objectives still need to be achieved and can be carried forward. There may be some new objectives based on the organisation's strategy. The staff member needs to know what the priorities are in order to plan their work. The line manager should not tell them exactly what to do, but rather empower them to choose how they are going to achieve the objectives.

Cycle of performance management



Performance management is a cycle that begins with objectives being set. The job description shows the tasks and responsibilities. Performance management is concerned with the 'outcomes' and 'how' a job is being done. Objectives need to be set to measure these. The cycle then continues with informal reviews (appraisals) throughout the year. As a result of these appraisals, the objectives are sometimes adjusted. A formal appraisal would normally occur once every six or twelve months and is followed by setting of objectives for the next year.

## Appraisals

The term 'appraisal' is used when a line manager talks with a staff member about their performance. It is helpful for organisations to develop a written process for appraisals, to provide forms for line managers and staff members to complete, and ensure there is support for staff (such as learning opportunities) after their formal appraisals. Some appraisals are formal and held every six or twelve months. Appraisals can also be carried out on a more informal basis throughout the year.

There are many benefits of appraisals. For example, an appraisal:

- **Helps to create good working relationships.** The opportunity to talk about work in a formal way can help the staff member and line manager to understand each other better and to build up trust.

- **Enables grievances to be heard.** Although line managers should be asking staff in regular meetings if they have any concerns, appraisals also provide an opportunity for staff to raise issues.
- **Shows how staff are performing.** The staff member can assume that they are performing well or poorly when actually their performance is the opposite.
- **Affirms staff if they have performed well.** It is important to praise staff for good work. This motivates them and shows them that they are contributing to the organisation's work.
- **Identifies personal development needs.** A review of performance may identify areas where learning opportunities need to be offered.
- **Shows staff that the organisation is concerned for their development.** Being valued is important to most people. A thorough appraisal process provides an opportunity for the line manager to spend time with an individual to listen to them. It shows that the organisation is concerned not only for performance, but also for the welfare and development of the person.
- **Provides a structure.** The staff member is aware through an appraisal form that the discussion will focus on how they are performing in their job. As everyone in the organisation goes through the formal process with their line manager, it will provide a sense of fairness.

#### Advice about carrying out appraisals

Here are some tips for line managers when carrying out appraisals:

- **Give adequate notice of the appraisal** so you and the staff member can prepare for it.
- **Be aware of your own mood.** Your mood will affect the way the staff member views you during the appraisal. Try to put your emotions to one side and focus calmly on the appraisal. If this is not possible, delay the appraisal until another day.
- **Make sure you have plenty of time.** This is particularly important if you are going to give some negative feedback. Allow plenty of time for the staff member to state their views.
- **Make sure there are no interruptions.** Choose a room where you will not be disturbed and where you can speak in confidence. Switch off your mobile phone.
- **Give any criticism in a constructive way.** Evaluate the performance of the staff member and not the individual. Emphasise their strengths and achievements. Suggest ways in which areas of weakness can be overcome and offer further support or learning opportunities.
- **Ensure that any documents are written soon after the appraisal.** This is particularly important for the formal appraisal. People like to know what is being recorded about them and may be anxious until they see the document.
- **Ensure that people understand what is expected of them.** Do not expect staff to perform well if expectations of them are not clear, particularly when they are new to their job. Outline both the standard of performance that is required and the goals to be achieved. Check that they have understood.
- **Judge performance and not the person.** Do not tell someone they are lazy as this can be unhelpful. Instead, say that the report was not produced on time. This is a statement of fact and of performance.

## Types and content of appraisals

There are three main types of appraisals:

- **INSTANT** – on the spot, could occur at any time during the day.
- **REGULAR** – weekly, fortnightly or monthly meetings.
- **FORMAL** – every six or twelve months. This type of appraisal produces an official record by using forms to describe progress on objectives and comments from the line manager on performance.

**Instant appraisals** Work is dynamic and things change every moment. One example of instant appraisal is praise or recognition. This could be done publicly or privately and can be the smallest of comments such as, 'Well done' or 'I really appreciated that'.

It is more difficult to give instant appraisal when work has not been delivered on time or behaviour has been inappropriate. Sometimes it is appropriate to deal with this quickly but in some situations it is better to delay a response. Ensure that the issue is dealt with in private and give the person time to explain the issue from their perspective.

**Regular appraisals** Regular appraisals usually involve short meetings between a staff member and their line manager. Sometimes these are called 'catch-ups'.

- **Regular catch-ups are essential.** It is important to book regular meetings and ensure that they are not ignored when staff are busy. The length and frequency of catch-ups will vary according to the situation, but they would usually take place each week or fortnight and last for about an hour.
- **Catch-ups should have a clear structure.** Ensure that staff are aware of the purpose of catch-ups and after consultation with the staff member, produce an agenda for each one. Content of an agenda could include:
  - Review of work progress
  - Review of progress towards meeting the individual's objectives
  - Intended work in the next week
  - Any issues to discuss relating to work or relationships with others
  - Areas for development.
- The catch-up should involve a **two-way conversation**. Give space for the individual to share their concerns and ask questions, as well as receiving the line manager's feedback. As well as discussing their work, ask how they are feeling and how they can be supported.
- **Catch-ups provide an ideal opportunity to give and receive negative and positive feedback.** Feedback should be two-way. In addition to the line manager giving feedback to the individual, the individual should be encouraged to give feedback to the line manager on the line manager's performance. The box opposite shows a model for giving feedback that allows honesty while minimising ill feeling.

Feedback model

### GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

- 1 Give the feedback as soon after the event as possible.
- 2 Give positive feedback as well as negative feedback. Negative feedback should be constructive.
- 3 Focus on facts rather than opinions.
- 4 Allow the person time to respond.
- 5 Provide practical ideas for how they do things better next time. Again, allow the person time to respond.
- 6 Ensure that your main aim is to improve matters for the team, including the team member you are talking to.

**Example 1**

*Person 1* Can I give you some feedback?

*Person 2* Yes, okay.

*Person 1* This morning in the interview you conducted, I noticed that you gave the person you were interviewing lots of time to answer each question. Because of that I believe we got much better answers. *[Pause to allow person 2 to respond]*

*Person 2* Thanks, I really appreciate that.

**Example 2**

*Person 1* Can I give you some feedback?

*Person 2* Yes, okay.

*Person 1* This morning when we were having the team meeting, I noticed that you shook your head when I was talking about what to do at the next meeting with the donors. That made me feel that you thought I was foolish. *[Pause to allow person 2 to respond]*

*Person 2* Oh! I had no idea I was doing that. I'm so sorry. I don't think you are foolish. Do let me know if I ever do it again.

Person 1 gives immediate feedback

Person 1 speaks about facts

Person 1 pauses and allows Person 2 to respond

Person 1 gives immediate feedback

Person 1 speaks about facts

- **End the catch-up with action points.** As a result of the discussions, both the individual and the line manager should agree what action they will take and what the deadline will be. Each should hold the other accountable for their action. In the next meeting they should review what progress has been made.

Formal appraisals There are two different situations in which formal appraisal happens:

- **PROBATIONARY REVIEWS**
- **ANNUAL OR SIX MONTH APPRAISALS**

**PROBATIONARY REVIEWS**

The probationary period lasts for the first few weeks of employment. At the end of the probationary period, a meeting is held to review the performance of the new recruit and to decide whether or not they are suitable for the role. If they are suitable, their employment should be confirmed. If they are not suitable, decide whether to end the contract or extend the probationary period to give time to address issues or provide training.

Throughout the probationary period, regular catch-ups should be held to ensure that issues are addressed early on. This will reduce the chance of surprises for the new recruit at the end of the probationary period. Particular support should be given during the probationary period, such as training and the opportunity to shadow other staff.

**ANNUAL OR SIX MONTH APPRAISALS**

The second type of formal appraisal is normally conducted every six months or at least every year.

A formal appraisal could focus on:

- Progress on objectives for the current year
- Reviewing how the staff member has performed their tasks and relationships with other staff
- Setting objectives for the coming year (see box below)
- Identifying a development plan for the coming year. A development plan helps the staff member to plan how they will gain the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for them to do their job better and to enable them to develop their career (see Section 7 for more details).

**SETTING OBJECTIVES**

Objectives should be clear and state what needs to be achieved and by when this should be achieved. It can be helpful to make objectives 'SMART':

<b><i>S</i>pecific</b>	Is the objective clear?
<b><i>M</i>easurable</b>	How will achievement of the objective be measured?
<b><i>A</i>chievable</b>	Can the objective be achieved using available time and resources?
<b><i>R</i>esults-oriented</b>	What will be the outcome? For example, 'To raise £1,000 from donors by the end of February by writing a proposal' is a SMART objective. 'Conduct work on raising money from donors' is an activity and not a SMART objective.
<b><i>T</i>ime-bound</b>	Does the objective have a clear deadline before the next formal appraisal?

Example of an appraisal form

APPRAISAL FORM		
Name:		
Team:		
Job title:		
Appraisal date:		
Objectives for current year	Comments on performance	
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
How well has the staff member delivered their other tasks for the year?		
Identify six or fewer SMART objectives for the coming year		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
Development objectives (What do you hope to achieve)	Development action (How will this be carried out?)	Deadline (When will this be achieved by?)
Staff member's comments		
Signature		Date
Line manager's comments		
Signature		Date

A staff member's performance is a combination of:

- Knowledge
- Capability
- Behaviour.

For example, someone might perform poorly if they:

- do not understand what they have to do (knowledge)
- are not capable of doing it consistently (capability) or;
- decide they are not going to do what is required (behaviour).

For these reasons, it is important to ask the staff member why they have performed poorly before making any judgment. If they have misunderstood the role or are not capable of carrying it out to a high standard, they require **support**. If they are not doing something willingly, this is a behavioural issue which requires **discipline**.

- Ask the individual about the best way to help them.
- Always write notes about the discussion and record any decisions that are made. These notes may be needed as evidence during a disciplinary hearing. As soon as possible the line manager should develop an action plan to support the staff member in improving their performance.
- Set a date to review progress and make the staff member aware of the consequences if performance does not improve. For example, bad behaviour may lead to a disciplinary hearing resulting in the loss of their job.

### Disciplinary procedures

The last resort for poor performance is to set up a disciplinary hearing. It is good practice for an organisation to have a disciplinary procedure which is stated in the terms of employment. Disciplinary principles include:

- The standard of work should be clearly explained so there is no misunderstanding.
- Job descriptions should be accurate.
- Staff should understand the conditions of a probationary period.
- The consequences of not meeting the required standards should be clearly explained.

### REFLECTION

- In what ways do line managers assess the performance of staff in our organisation? Is this effective? Why?
- Should our organisation assess the performance of its volunteers? If so, what aspects of their performance could be assessed?
- Does our organisation have any formal appraisal processes? If not, should it have any?
- How is poor performance dealt with in our organisation? Is this appropriate?