

The way we work has changed. Has your performance management system kept up?

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Our world of work has changed tremendously over the past three years but has our performance management system evolved to meet these changes? Are performance management systems still in place and necessary?



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Let's begin by unpacking what the purpose of performance management is. Why do companies have performance management systems in place? The purpose is a means of getting better results from the organisation, its teams, and individuals by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, objectives, and standards.

Performance management is also aimed at creating an understanding of the performance outputs expected. But what if our way of work has changed? Covid-19 has changed the way of work with most companies adopting a hybrid model for some of their employees. Are their performance management policies, procedures and practices updated to accommodate these changes? Are annual or bi-annual performance reviews sufficient for an employee to succeed in their current role and achieve the company's goals and strategy?

In the past, performance management systems were fixed around predetermined KPA's and timelines. With the current times we are faced with, performance management systems need to be more flexible and adaptable as both our environment and people have evolved. People are no longer required to come to the office daily and many are feeling disengaged. Performance management needs to be more flexible, personalised and more frequent. A company can only succeed if they have the right people with the right attitude working towards a common goal. People are the number one success factor to any company succeeding.



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Performance management is essential for any organisation as it:

- Drives organisational outcomes
- Improves performance on the present job
- Provides for the development of the employee
- Rewards high performance
- Strengthens the manager – employee relationship
- Provides management with current data for use in its organisational planning efforts
- Provides employees with performance feedback

What factors determine a robust successful “new” performance management system?

1. Re-evaluate KPA's and see if they are still valid – are the current KPA's still relevant or do they need to be realigned?
2. Are KPA's measuring outputs or input. People can no longer be measured on the hours spent at the office, hence, to focus on outputs vs. inputs
3. Are the job descriptions updated or realigned to the new way of work?
4. Set clear objectives that speak to the individual's as well as the company's end goals
5. Set CSMART goals – Challenging, Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant and Time-bound.
6. Focus on quality and regular performance conversations to facilitate engagement, purpose and performance
7. Provide regular feedback – this is very important as, traditionally in the past, it was one-sided (the manager evaluating the employee's performance). Performance reviews need to now shift to being more conversational with a two-way conversation taking place between managers and employees. Use the “sandwich” technique. Mention areas in need of improvement in employee's work between positive aspects.
8. Be aware and show interest in the employee's individual circumstances and experience.
9. Include personal development plans in your conversation. Offer assistance and provide coaching and mentoring where required.
10. Trust your employee – trust that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.



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For a company to succeed, performance management is vital as employees need to have direction and be recognized for their work performed. In addition, it is extremely important to have engaged employees that understand how they fit into the “bigger picture”. This will result in retention and encourage growth. Employees want to feel like they belong, and with the hybrid model, it is easy to miss out on achieving that sense of belonging. Thus the fact that Performance Management review sessions are of great importance if a company is wanting to succeed financially.

In closing, Jake Welch said:

“ There are only three measurements that tell you nearly everything you need to know about your organisation’s overall performance: employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and cash flow. ”

It goes without saying that no company, small or large, can win over the long run without energised employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it.

Performance management can be a strategic tool used by managers to achieve exactly this.

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