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How to make performance management work for you

How many managers or employees think performance management is worthwhile? From my experience and research, the answer is few. And, on the other hand, how many complain that the manager or employee is on a different page from one another? Most. This leaves a paradox - most people think performance management doesn't provide value yet they need something to fill the gap between the manager and employee. The answer lies in not just doing performance reviews because you have to but to put effort into making them valuable for both the manager and the employee. The results will follow.

A valuable performance management process can provide more benefits to the company than large bonuses, trips to Europe and the like. It can yield significant business results (profitability, cash flow, customer service) and personal results (meaningful work, enjoying the job etc). And, it costs nothing - except a small amount of time and effort. How can you achieve this?

First, it is just a matter of priority. A manager and employee should set aside at least an hour each quarter to get together to discuss the prior quarter's results, discuss the next quarter's focus/ goals, etc. Then, it just requires follow-up along the way as priorities change, successes are achieved (a simple "great job" can suffice), etc. Why do many people say this is impossible and takes too much time? After all, it is 4 hours per year with a few minutes now and then. And, this 4 hours can eliminate hours and hours of lost time due to confusion, worry etc when the manager and employee are "not on the same page". What can be more important than your #1 asset - people!

Second, set clear expectations. It sounds simple but is often one of the largest reasons for lost productivity - the goals are not clear. Ideally, the manager and employee will discuss the goals together, how they relate to the company's vision, how they'll measure progress etc. The most important thing is for both parties to leave the meeting with a clear understanding of the key goals (not 100 goals - just the top 3 or 5 is fine), including why they are important, what tools/ training is required to achieve them, and how they will address if a conflict in priorities or an issue arises.

Third, build on strengths; don't worry about weaknesses. Often times, everyone gets hung up on what he or she doesn't do well. Of course, you need to improve upon any weakness area that is required for the job to the point where it isn't a significant hindrance; however, what is infinitely more important is to build upon strengths. Not only does it make the work more enjoyable (who doesn't enjoy doing what they are good at doing?), but it also increases productivity and business results significantly. Ideally, work as a team. Find each person's strengths. Utilize each person's strengths to deliver the project/ task. And, the end result will be significantly better with much less effort. A win-win!

Lastly, provide immediate feedback - for both the manager and the employee. If you see something that can be improved upon, why wait to talk about it in a performance review? How many people would prefer to receive continual coaching of small improvements so you can be successful in a job rather than receive negative feedback once a year in a performance review when you can't remember what happened, can't do anything about it and it might be tied to a future raise? On the other hand, who wouldn't want to continually improve? Equally as important, provide immediate positive

feedback as well. The way to build upon strengths is to know when you've achieved a small success to build upon. And, who doesn't like to receive positive feedback continually?

Give it a try. I'd be interested to hear about your results.

Lisa's Tips - Presentation Skills

1. Find a mentor: It is amazing how different things can appear to the presenter vs. the audience. Find someone who is supportive of your goals, will provide you with positive and constructive feedback, and has some skill that you'd like to learn. Ask for their help. Most people are quite willing to share their expertise.
2. Consider the audience: You can put together the best presentation in the world but if it doesn't meet the needs of the audience, it is a waste. Find out what matters to your audience and tailor your presentation to them.
3. Talk as you speak: As my mentors have told me many times, don't read from slides. Instead, talk about the subject as you usually speak. It allows you to be interesting and conversational instead of boring (people can read slides on their own) and stiff. Get to know your subject in advance so you are prepared, and then relax and just talk during your presentation. Ideally, use examples, stories and metaphors - they bring your topic to life.
4. Provide value: Have a point. Provide value to the audience. A good question to ask yourself as you prepare is "will the audience be better off after they leave the presentation? How? Will they have an idea they could implement that will improve their business or personal condition today?"
5. Enjoy it: One of the best ways to successfully present is to enjoy it. Talk about something you are passionate about. Your passion will show through.

Recommended Reading

[Before You Quit Your Job](#) by Robert T. Kiyosaki with Sharon L. Lechter - it is a fabulous read on the critical success factors of life. It is about 10 real-life lessons every entrepreneur should know about building a multimillion-dollar business; however, what I found interesting is that these lessons/ skills are the same ones everyone needs to be successful in life. This book provides a blueprint for understanding the critical skills and beliefs required to be successful in life - regardless of your chosen path.

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