

## Building Capability and Culture

It seems to me that many organizations- and people, well intentioned or just blindly following or complying with some 'latest business article', gain very little from the performance review process. A sad however honest commentary.

It is far better to not do a performance review than it is to consistently or inconsistently implement an ineffective performance review form, process or interaction. Equally- performance review need not be dreaded, complicated or a compliance act committed once yearly to satisfy good human resource practice. The purpose and intent of performance review is not for 'bragging rights' to say "we do them in my organization".

**The intent of this brief article** is to share some insight, perspective and experience from over 25 years of proven practice and 'miss-takes.' It is not to persuade you to do performance review when you don't want to. It is not to present a detailed design and rollout process for you or your organization. I firmly believe the performance review process and experience shapes organization culture and as such one begins by asking, "What message and experience do we want our performance review process to communicate? What outcomes do we expect?" We design from these answers forward. Where you are on this and where you go from here is certainly your call.

### Perspective

Performance review is part of your Performance System often referred to as Performance Management. The purpose is to plan for, implement and build performance (and capability) in specific people and the organization over a specified time period. Results associated with this learning and building process are significant and meaningful to those involved. Achieving these results is essential- it really matters. Performance review or performance evaluation is the step and time when the outcomes and behavior (performance) are focused on for the purpose of reaching an agreement as to what was achieved (outcomes) and how it was achieved (behavior, performance, impact, process, etc.). This is an interaction done with, not to, people.

### Performance Planning

Is determining, documenting and agreeing to what someone is expected to do, is learning to do and the associated outcomes expected. This agreement forms the baseline and action plan for learning, building, performing and achieving over a specified period thus framing performance as what the person does, learns, how they go about doing it and the expected outcomes. **Caution-** when this step is not clear, not mutually understood or omitted it is futile to attempt to meaningfully review performance and outcomes, other than subjectively, at some future point.

### Performance Review

A conversation by all involved- the person since it is their performance and another person often the person they report to. It is focused on, discussing and reviewing outcomes/results achieved, how they perform as an individual and interacting with others (inside and outside the organization). A conversation covering the points of impact, influence, learning associated with what was done and how it was done. The review process equally includes planning for the coming 12 months (what to do,

expected outcomes, what to learn, etc. which links to Performance Planning). This cycle establishes the focus and metrics for performance and outcomes creating the content and points for the performance review commonly 6 or 12 months down the road. Checkpoints are identified and completed between the plan development step and the review step. Performance review outcomes are not a surprise. Performance review is a continuous process- not a yearly, dreaded event. A meaningless performance plan is a sure bet for a 12 month later meaningless performance review.

### **Performance- Plan For It and Review It**

Each element (planning, application/learning, checkpoints, review) done effectively with relevance and meaning to the people involved and the goals/work at hand increases the effectiveness of the entire process. The performance review is time to check and update the position description and expected outcomes for the position. It is a time to assure that documentation and measures are clear, relevant, current and commonly understood by all involved.

### **Forming a Performance System**

Other aspects contributing to **Performance Management** include disciplinary action, recognition, development and learning, periodic performance check points throughout the year, planned and situational discussions or meetings re: performance and outcomes. The point is this is a series of interactions and touch points forming a linked chain of processes, interaction and learning points. As you might suspect this contributes to shaping and creating organization **Culture** for better or worse. This is why a poorly done performance review is the kiss of death and grows over time.

### **About Keeping It Simple**

Performance Review just does not have to be complicated. An effective Performance Plan and Review can be as basic as two people getting together and agreeing on what will be achieved with associated outcomes, challenges they anticipate/how to address them, how it will be done (action plan) and what is targeted for learning. Document on paper/electronically with measurable check points (to determine progress or lack of) and measurable outcomes (to evaluate the results). Focus on **Performance Results** (what achieved/outcomes) and **Performance Behavior** (how done/behavior technical and interactive with others). For positions of leadership, the focus is often on Leadership Behavior along with technical area performance.

### **Decide**

"Do I and we want to make this as an effective and meaningful experience and part of creating our culture?" If yes- begin. Everyone will learn along the way.

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