

Practical people management, step by step



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Give your managers the tools and techniques they need to manage people's performance

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"I just don't feel confident as a manager. I don't feel I know enough about how to do it, how to get the best out of people and how to avoid the pitfalls"

Training is probably the best understood way to build a manager's effectiveness in managing performance. Heaven knows, there's been enough money spent on developing managers skills over the years. Has it always had the impact we hoped for? Not always, for a number of reasons:

- There is limited expectation that the outcomes from the training will be put into practice
- Senior managers struggling to find the time to coach their managers in the practical application of P&S theory into practice
- The training itself being weak – specifically in failing to provide practical models and tools

Let's focus on the training.

The Purpose of Models and Tools

Skills are important, of course they are, and skills can be learnt. But learning skills, particularly the interpersonal skills such as listening, rapport building and conflict management takes considerable time and effort and often requires ongoing coaching. A way of building management competence and confidence more quickly, and as a foundation for the skills, is by providing managers with models, tools and techniques they can apply immediately. Here's some clarity on the terms:

Models

Generally an overview or pictorial description of a process or concept (the model at App A is an example). They give managers a view of the bigger picture and are an excellent way of exploring the purpose of a process and engaging managers in applying those processes

Tools and Techniques

Practical (and at Ladder Consulting, usually step-by-step) processes that managers can use as road maps or guidelines. The tools are the 'what to do' and the techniques are the 'how to do it'. Here are some examples of the tools and techniques I share with managers:

- A three step process for defining and agreeing performance standards and objectives
- A three step process for checking the level of clarity a manager has around attributes
- A three step process for defining and agreeing attributes as performance standards
- A three step process for describing performance problems and business consequence
- A seven step process for achieving performance improvement
- A three step process for defining staff satisfaction criteria
- A three step process for discussing staff satisfaction
- A sample agenda for a performance review meeting
- A three step process for introducing change
- An eight step process for introducing and embedding performance management into a business

Access to tools and techniques

The key issue here is giving managers access to a range of tools and techniques which can make the seemingly complex much, much simpler. How can we expect managers to know, for example, that there is a simple way to give feedback about even the most 'difficult' performance issue so that the issue can be understood and accepted by the staff member? Managers just don't have the time to work these processes out for themselves so they either waste a lot of time (and staff good will) on 'trial and error' or they just give up. If I had a penny for every experienced manager who has said to me 'I wish I'd have known this 20 years ago' I'd have heck of a lot of pennies.

Practical Action Options

- Assess the tools and techniques your managers need – you could use the bullet points above as a checklist
- Research the tools and techniques available and make them available to your managers

- c) Develop your own tools and techniques based on your experience and coach your managers in how to use them
- d) Ask your high performing managers to coach their colleagues in the tools and techniques they use
- e) Contact me to explore the options