

Good Work Design: Enhancing performance



Australian Government
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Performance development or management is a core part of every manager and supervisor's job

All managers 'do' performance management, while great managers **enhance** the performance of their team.

Why it matters

Effective performance development is the key to having an engaged, motivated and high performing team – which ultimately makes your job much easier.

However, research shows that only 2 in 10 employees strongly agree that their performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work.

Inadequate reward and recognition is a psychosocial hazard that can create a risk to health and safety. Comcare provides specific guidance on this risk.

How it's done

Every organisation has different performance systems and processes to follow. Managers who also undertake these simple performance activities are likely to have higher performing and engaged teams.

'Clear expectations are the most basic and fundamental employee need. Employees who strongly agree that their job description aligns with the work they do are 2.5 times more likely than other employees to be engaged.' *Gallup, 2022*



1 Give clear expectations

People work best when they know the purpose of the work and what is expected of them.

- Let your team members know **what** they need to do, **why** they need to do it and **when** they need to do it by.
- Make sure you know **who** in the team is best placed to do the work and what resources they need.
- Check in with your workers to see if they are clear on what they need to do.



What great managers do



Give clear expectations

Purpose

What the work is

When to deliver

2 Focus on strengths

- Talk to your team members about what their strengths are and how they can use them in their work each day.
- Help your people to develop their strengths. Focusing on weakness is ineffective and demoralising.
- Review roles and encourage your employees to engage in their own [job crafting](#) to shape aspects of their work to align better with their values, strengths and passions.
- Remember that [people who work in a strengths-based environment](#) learn their roles faster, produce higher quality work, stay with their organisation longer and are more engaged.

Research shows that the highest performing teams believed that 'I have the chance to use my strengths every day.'

Ott, J *Reinventing Performance Management: A Deloitte Case Study, 2017*

3 Give regular 'real time' feedback

- Provide feedback to your team members on their work while they are doing it or as soon as possible.
- Recognise and reward progress and quality performance.
- Offer suggestions for improvements that the person can implement immediately, without criticising them or keeping the focus on the past. For example, 'I noticed when you talked about X this morning that Amy looked confused. How about you provide some more background on X at the next meeting and highlight why we want to do it this way?'
- Make it a conversation about how improvements can be made. Listen to your worker's perspective and ideas and create space for them to be part of the solution.
- Understand that 'real time', future-focussed feedback is meaningful and likely to shape your employees' upcoming work.

People 'should be [recognized for great work](#) about once a week – highlighting what an employee does right encourages them to do more of it.'





Give feedback on their work as they are doing it



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4 Focus on future performance

You can't change a person's past performance, but you have an opportunity to influence the future.

- Keep conversations focussed on ways to shape and support future performance so that people can meet deliverables and achieve results.
- Understand that most people want to grow personally and professionally. Know your workers' career goals and motivations and provide helpful development opportunities. This can include individual coaching, training courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, shadowing, mentoring or stretch opportunities.

5 Check in regularly

Research shows that touching base with employees regularly – daily or weekly – is more likely to lead to a more motivated, engaged and high performing team.

Ask [simple questions](#) every day or week.

- 'What's going well in your role?'
- 'What challenges are you facing?'
- 'How are you feeling?'
- 'What feedback do you have for me?'
- 'How can I help?'

'Your role as a manager is to make sure your employees are in roles that fit.'

Marcus Buckingham, First Break all the Rules

6 What about when performance declines?

Performance declines for many reasons and there may be more than one factor involved. Sometimes people are managing an illness or other difficult personal circumstances. Sometimes there are problems at work. Whatever the reason, a decline in performance can indicate that a person is struggling and needs more support.

- **Find out why performance has declined**
This is your chance to understand if there is lack of clarity about their work, if work demands are unsustainable, if there are relationship issues at work, or if they have something else going on in their lives that is impacting their performance.
- **Support them to get back on track**
Consider how the work design can be altered to better support the person's whole life. This could be as easy as providing clearer expectations, more work resources, or flexible work arrangements that help them to meet personal demands, while still delivering their work.

It could be as simple as saying:

'I've noticed your work is falling behind. Is everything ok? What can I do to help?'

