



Manage the Performance of Teams and Individuals

■ *Scope*

This unit explores a manager's responsibility in getting the best out of his team through the appropriate allocation of work objectives focused on achieving the organisation's business goals. Performance management is not simply the appraisal of performance but a holistic process which requires the explanation of organisational aims. It encompasses the development of team and individual objectives; setting up appropriate systems or indicators for measuring success or failure to reach the agreed standards; feedback that is constructive and meaningful, and support for employees to develop and acquire the skills essential to fully contribute to business success.

This unit has four elements:

- C13.1** Allocate Work to Teams and Individuals
- C13.2** Agree Objectives and Work Plans with Teams and Individuals
- C13.3** Assess the Performance of Teams and Individuals
- C13.4** Provide Feedback for Teams and Individuals on Their Performance

Points to Ponder

Within the workplace goal-setting is closely linked to employee development because it is the process of deciding on the required objectives of an organisation that will ultimately guide and direct the behaviour of individuals within it. A great deal has been written about performance management and teams. Armstrong (1994) defines performance management as:

- ***Getting better results from the organisation, teams and individuals by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards and competence requirements.***

Another definition developed by Hendy (1997) is,

- ***A systematic approach to improving individual and team performance in order to achieve organisational goals... the approach taken should depend on your organisation, its culture, and its relationship with employees and the type of jobs that they do.***

These definitions acknowledge performance management as closely linked to an organisation's structure, culture and corporate goals. In essence any performance management system must recognise the need for developing people and the need for employees to take ownership of the quality of their outputs.

Unit C13

The process starts with a clear statement of the organisation's mission, its values and beliefs. Publishing a glossy mission statement alone is not enough: effective communication and actions supporting the mission statement will get the employees' commitment and their active involvement. In fact the organisation needs to 'live' its values and beliefs.

An effective Human Resources strategy will acknowledge the crucial role the workplace plays in securing the corporate objectives; it will also create an environment where employees understand the standards of performance and conduct expected of them as well as the support available to reach that standard.

As Perrow (1972) points out, most organisations have limited resources and so it is likely that in order to achieve certain goals others have to be left to one side. Some type of organisational goals are not easily reconciled with others; for example, a derived goal of protecting an employee from the Health and Safety angle can conflict with the system goal of profit which means that there can be conflict and competition between goals.

The allocation of work objectives is a key point in measuring performance. Unless the objectives are set with a definite understanding of what is to be achieved – what the factors are affecting performance and how they might be overcome – measuring of actual against planned performance becomes impossible. Performance management is:

- **A formal management process**
- **A review and planning event**
- **Objective based**
- **A personal and team development opportunity**
- **A participative process**
- **An empowering process**
- **Reduce high levels of stress by reducing dysfunctional conflict**
- **Increases intrinsic motivation and thus the performance of tasks**

Allocating work effectively according to each employee's ability and skills, at the same time as providing development opportunities, makes the likelihood of increased productivity extremely high. Each individual's planned performance becomes a building block in the corporate performance pyramid. Since all organisations have multiple goals, it is important that goals at a particular level in an organisation do not conflict with each other.



Unless all motivation theories are completely wrong, a fair and equitable performance management process will bring about a motivated workforce. By involving the employee in preparation, planning, objective setting, problem solving and development, a good manager brings to the forefront several motivational factors as described by Maslow and Herzberg:

- **Recognition**
- **Job enrichment**
- **Responsibility for decision making**
- **Potential advancement**
- **Opportunities for higher achievement**

Unit C13

Good managers will remain constantly in touch with their team and each individual in it and on a day-to-day basis they will be fully aware of what is going on; however, the formal appraisal process involves:

- **Thorough preparation**
- **Two way discussion**
- **Continuous monitoring and adjustment**

The **preparation** stage involves revisiting last year's objectives: what supporting evidence there is which confirms the level of performance actually achieved; which factors affected the employee's performance (external which are beyond the employee's control and internal which are within the employee's control); what this year's objectives should be (the manager considering the department's overall objectives and the contribution required from the employee and the employee's ability to achieve these objectives); and what support might be needed for the employee to be successful. This preparation has to be undertaken by both the manager and the employee so that the appraisal becomes a discussion not an interview.

The appraisal needs to take place in an open and non-confrontational environment. Privacy is important as the process often involves the discussion of personal and sensitive issues. An appropriate length of uninterrupted time has to be dedicated to each employee.

The **discussion** stage is the exploration of past actual achievement against planned performance; the exploration of the positive and negative contributors to the employee's performance and the agreement of future objectives, priorities, timescales, support mechanisms and development needs. As a starting point of this stage, the manager and employee look at the past year and identify how easy or difficult it has been to achieve a degree of planned performance. What were the difficulties and what were the surprises? The use of emotive words at this stage will convert the whole process into an attack on the individual who will in turn respond by being defensive thus resulting in a battle which makes reaching any form of agreement impossible. The idea is to bring about a change in the employee's behaviour, not to vent your frustration on them!

It is important to remember that over-performance requires just as much investigation as under-performance.



The next step is to agree on objectives for the coming year and deciding on the support needed to achieve them. If the goals are set with the employee's involvement he or she is likely to be committed to making them successful. Mutually agreed goals have to be **SMART**:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound

By seeking the employee's input, the manager is showing regard for their views as well as acknowledging that they know more about the day-to-day realities of their job.

The link between individual goals and the organisation's goals has to be made clear to the employee at this stage; if the employees cannot see the end product they are likely to lose interest in what they are doing.

The follow up or ongoing **monitoring** involves providing the support the manager has promised. Considering that the objectives jointly agreed is a negotiated contract, if the manager fails to deliver it the contract becomes void and the employee becomes demotivated. Most damagingly the credibility of the whole process is lost for ever. As part of monitoring, review the progress that the employee makes regularly and informally.

Key appraisal skills:

- **Build on the employee's self-esteem**
- **Attack problems not people**
- **Actively seek the employee's input**
- **Interpersonal skills (listening, giving information, seeking information, clarifying, summarising, responding to feelings as well as words)**
- **Specific, timely and meaningful feedback**

Employees learn from the consequences of what they do, it is therefore vital that managers take care when they apply any form of positive or negative reinforcement. The current culture in organisations is that performance expectations are constantly rising within the workplace which means all members have to take responsibility for organisational performance.

Unit C13

The New Learning for New Work consortium has produced a list of imperatives for employee development:

- **Focus on performance challenges for individuals and teams**
- **See performance challenges as encompassing tomorrow's employability as well as today's work**
- **Recognise that most development is the result of social interaction**
- **See development needs and pathways as contingent**
- **Assume that everyone has rights as well as responsibilities**
- **Collaborate to develop capabilities**

The onus is on acknowledging that people are the critical stakeholders and that their views count and that the system should operate as a partnership of joint ventures. Fonda and Guile (1999) refer to the following guiding principles for managers:

- **Managers should respect the views of the workforce. They should listen to what employees say and seek to respond**
- **They should be clear about the kinds of capabilities expected of the workforce and make these public**
- **Managers should recognise that the development of these capabilities depends on creating an environment in which everyone focuses on results and on facing the challenges to be overcome to achieve them**
- **Managers should work to the principles of subsidiary – that is, moving accountability, authority and responsibility to where people in the organisation have the information needed for value-adding decision and action**
- **Managers should understand that employees need competent support in identifying and responding to challenges**
- **They should be aware that everybody has their own talents and interests. It is pointless to expect them to take responsibility for situations that they are not interested in or good at handling**
- **Managers should be conscious that this 'challenge and support' environment will not happen on its own. It must be encouraged and regularly reviewed**



One of a manager's most important responsibilities is to manage the development of his or her employees. Nowadays, the work environment is rapidly changing with increasing work mobility bringing about alternatives and potential for almost any worker. Apart from working out the skills that an employee has, it is necessary to work out what he/she needs to know in order to develop. Individuals learn in a variety of ways – through their experiences, attending classes, training sessions, working on projects, independent reading and travelling. Since appraisal requires employees to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, it empowers them to take responsibility for their own personal growth.

Managers can empower their staff by:

- **Expressing positive confidence in their staff**
- **Creating positive opportunities for employees to participate in decision making**
- **Removing bureaucratic restraints**
- **Setting inspirational yet achievable goals in partnership with individuals**

The management of performance can only thrive and be effective when there is total commitment to continuous improvement across the whole range of business objectives. It is no longer sufficient just to turn up and do a reasonably good job to an agreed standard. Organisations will cease to be effective unless people come into work determined to improve, albeit in small incremental steps, the quality of the work they do in every area of their operation. If everyone increased their output by 1% each month, consider the impact on the organisation, particularly if they reduced their costs by 1% at the same time. Continuous improvement is based on the concept of making many small improvements across the whole range of operations. It is improving a hundred things by 1%, rather than improving one thing by 100%. It relies on the commitment of the whole organisation rather than on a small elite of creative people.

The issue of people who have not met some or all of their performance requirements is an important one. There are various causes behind the performance gap:

- **The gap between requirements and the employee's capability**
- **The absence of clear and measurable feedback**
- **The absence of sufficient resources to carry out objectives**
- **The lack of authority that goes with the responsibility to carry out objectives**
- **Lack of motivation or commitment from the individual**
- **The lack of clear direction**
- **The lack of reward or recognition for objectives achieved successfully**
- **Bureaucratisation**
- **Subjectivity**

In fact the three questions to be considered in managing sub-standard performance are:

- 1. A lack of skills that could be put right through training and development?**
- 2. A lack of capability that will not respond to training?**
- 3. An unwillingness to perform?**

The resulting diagnosis determines the managerial response. If the shortfall is caused by lack of skills then training interventions and further review will be the answer; if the shortfall is due to an inherent lack of capability or an unwillingness to learn and improve then redeployment, counselling or disciplinary action might result. At any rate, performance problems need to be tackled as soon as practically possible and as close to the point of origin, that is, the manager. It is strongly recommended that the manager takes advice from the organisation's Human Resources personnel in dealing with performance problems so that fair and equitable treatment is ensured.

Regular feedback plays a crucial role in a robust performance management system. Feedback that focuses on allocating blame damages the employee's self-esteem and confidence and acts as a negative influence on performance. Fowler (1996) puts forward the key factors in giving feedback:

- **Be specific, sweeping generalisations are meaningless: the employee needs particular examples or evidence from work situations indicating strengths and weaknesses in order to illustrate learning points and improved performance**
- **Be constructive, highlight what can be learnt from specific events and how improvements can be made**
- **Tackle problems, not personality: avoid comments about attitude or personality that cannot be changed and concentrate on behaviour and the way it affects performance. Performance is all about what people do not what they are!**
- **Give feedback regularly as a means of continuous improvement, not as a 'once a year chore' that both the manager and the employee dread. Feedback is not an annual event but a timely event that takes place close the activity itself**
- **Build on the employee's self-esteem: feedback is not all about 'telling' what is wrong but also about celebrating success and good practices**
- **Avoid argument: a practical discussion involving the employee's point of view as well is better and more constructive than a damning condemnation of the employee**
- **Explain the rationale behind any change in objectives, their timescales or success criteria**
- **The discussion should be a two-way process: at times it is essential that the employee is given an opportunity to express his or her assessment of the manager and how helpful or otherwise the managerial support has been**



Feedback is the vehicle for reinforcing appropriate behaviour, expected standards or for bringing about individual change. The development of individual career plans and organisational succession plans are the outputs from appraisals. A knowledge of individual strengths and weaknesses, facilitated through self-reflection and open dialogue between employee and manager, aids realistic career plans for the individual; the manager benefits from knowing individual aspirations and potential which can be matched against the future needs of the organisation.

Investigate

- 1. Critically evaluate an appraisal you have carried out for an employee you manage. Discuss how this helped to achieve the goals of your organisation, at the same time meeting the needs of the individual for recognition and reward.***

If you have never done this yourself, write a detailed reflective report on how you might implement a system to allocate work to individuals that will allow the achievement of organisational goals and contribute to employee motivation and commitment.

In either of the situations, highlight the key points you have learned from this unit.

Unit C13

■ *Guidance for Gathering Evidence for this Unit*

Write a personal narrative covering all criteria and clearly indicate where supporting workplace evidence can be found. Note – If you do the exercise based on you workplace, it will give you a number of criteria for the performance evidence as well as knowledge evidence.

Possible Sources of Supporting Evidence		
Unit C13 - Manage the Performance of Teams and Individuals		
<i>Possible Source of Evidence</i>	<i>Used</i>	<i>Location in Workplace/Portfolio</i>
Documents or testimonies showing your methods of allocating or delegating work to your staff		
Evidence showing how you match an individual's ability to the work objectives you have set for him or her, how you have reached agreement on objectives		
How you ensure that all staff are motivated and committed and how you negotiate when there is a conflict between objectives and resources		
Minutes or notes of individual or team meetings with staff to discuss objectives		
Documents showing your discussions with individuals on their performance, completed appraisal documents		
Development and training plans you have devised for each employee		
Documents showing your feedback to your staff, subsequent actions you have taken to address sub-standard performance and how these link with your organisation's policies		
Testimonies from your staff on your way of giving feedback		
Candidate's Signature		
Assessor's Signature		

