

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Module Name:

Understanding the Link between Individual and
Organisational Performance – On the Job Training 1 & 3

Word Count: **881**

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By signing below, I confirm that the work/evidence presented is my own, unaided work. I understand the regulations pertaining to candidate malpractice and the action that may be taken as a result.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Hook', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Date: 18/09/2021

1. Discussing Pembrokeshire County Council's approach to performance management and what needs to change as a result of the pandemic

Pembrokeshire County Council's (PCC) approach to performance management is already under a period of change, which was planned to launch in early 2020 but unfortunately was set back by the pandemic. This was part of a suite of new processes developed by Learning and Development (L&D) and Transformations to improve corporate culture. I met with a Learning and Development coordinator and my line manager before and after I attended a briefing session on the new framework and spoke with managers who I support to gauge the impact of this new plan and how it would improve performance and wellbeing among staff.

Lockdown, work from home orders and adjustments to roles have all had a large impact on staff at PCC. There are now a much higher number of long term absence cases linked to mental health with staff who are overworking or not getting the human contact they would have benefitted from previously (Brown, 2021). This has been felt especially amongst corporate roles as they are most likely to have been asked to remain at home for the duration. Finance and Legal teams, for example, were areas of the organisation that had never needed much support from an Employee Relations perspective but the pandemic has shown that these staff did not adjust well to being sent home without guidance from their manager on how they were performing and coping. Due to the 'sun-setting' of the former, traditional annual appraisal process and the delay in launching the new performance management plan this has meant that it has been left to each service area to address performance and wellbeing concerns during the pandemic without a formal structure in place until 2021. As a result, managers have seen inconsistencies in performance, as they have not had the regular contact with staff to address issues, which may have just needed course correction at the start.

The new 'Performance & Wellbeing Plan' addresses this lack of regular contact by introducing a monthly performance cycle (Armstrong, 2009, p. 62) for corporate roles with an emphasis on self-assessment for staff and consistent recording of objectives for each month kept in an online platform (Schrage, et al., 2019). The manager can collaborate on this platform, allowing feedback to be delivered between conversations and ensure that objectives set by the individual align with those of the organisation (Gifford, 2020). The aim is that this will offer staff more autonomy in owning their development while allowing managers to be a guiding hand with coaching style conversations and checking in on the wellbeing of staff (Winfield, et al., 2020).

This agile approach (Wigert & Barrett, 2020) supports the more agile way that we are currently working and it is unfortunate this did not launch before the pandemic forced these changes. It is hoped by L&D and HR that this new plan will support the hybrid approach we are likely to be taking to working from home and the office as development does not just happen with a manager and employee sitting in a room but is a continual process. The test for this employee led approach will be whether staff can be honest about how they feel they are performing, as consistent manager proximity is not going to be possible. This is an area that HR can support in; ensuring managers are encouraging staff to be transparent in discussing their weaknesses and areas of opportunity in a trusting relationship (Taylor, 2016, p. 206).

2. My own development needs aligned with the CIPD Profession Map

The recent rollout of the new performance management framework is a good opportunity to build on my skills as an adviser and on influencing managers engagement with the training and resources. This aligns with my current CPD focus on developing the 'Skilled Influencer' Behaviour through persuasive writing and conversation. As I work with a range of different vocational and corporate service managers, I am learning to be adaptable to the different ways that they work and approach organisation wide initiatives such as this.

The objectives I have set myself with my manager has been to have a conversation about the new performance management with all managers I support, understanding any barriers to this being implemented across the team and gathering feedback for L&D and HR. The framework becomes mandatory next April so there is plenty of time to help managers prepare for this deadline. I also plan to speak about the work I am doing with managers on performance at team meetings to raise awareness amongst the wider HR team and help influence similar behaviour in my colleagues.

There is not much data currently on how the new framework is performing; aside for data on who has attended training and started a plan. It would be helpful to have evidence to back up the long term impacts on both performance and wellbeing. I will also continue to work closely with L&D to understand how this is working. Having quantifiable and opinion-based data on the organisational benefits of good performance management at PCC will help support managers who have been less inclined to engage with the platform.

I have discussed with my manager about having more opportunities to support both performance improvement and capability cases with the service areas I support. This will improve my confidence in both the process itself and in handling managers and their employee to keep the process fair and objective.

References

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