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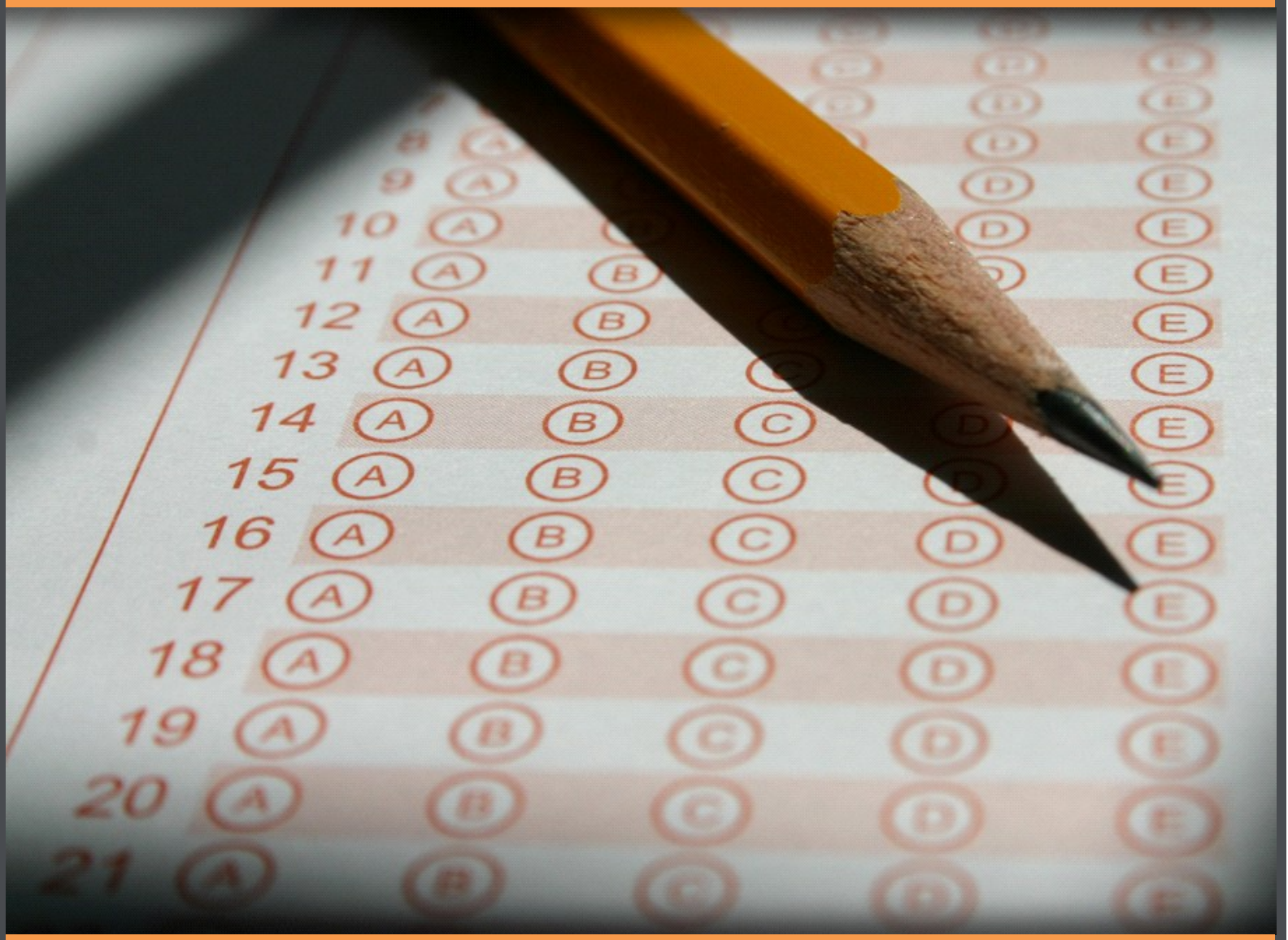

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Preface

The appraisal process, if conducted correctly, can have a really positive impact on the performance and ongoing development of your staff.

These are quarterly, half yearly or yearly meetings where a line manager and their staff members get together to discuss performance, development plans and set objectives for the upcoming period.

In this textbook you will cover the essential skills of how to prepare for and run an effective appraisal.

Sean McPheat, the Founder and Managing Director of management development specialists, MTD Training is the author of this publication. Sean has been featured on CNN, BBC, ITV, on numerous radio stations and has contributed to many newspapers. He's been featured in over 250 different publications as a thought leader within the management development and training industry.

MTD has been working with a **wide variety of clients** (both large and small) in the UK and internationally for several years.

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1. Introduction

When many people think about appraisals, they think of a once-a-year event in which they sit down with their employees and review performance over the past year. However, this is not the most effective way to run appraisals. It leaves too much time between an employee's actions and the feedback they receive. It leaves too much time between when an event occurs and when you talk about it or remember it. And it leaves too many missed opportunities for you to be an effective coach and supervisor.

> One of the major roles of a supervisor is to do performance appraisals of their team members. Although some people find the appraisal process to be difficult or unpleasant, when it is done effectively it is all about partnership and motivation.

Instead, effective appraisals are those that take place, even if it's informally, all year long. It is a process of continual feedback and communication between you and your employees. An effective appraisal process is actually a method of performance management that involves many roles. You must be a communicator, a leader, a role model, and a collaborator. Each individual member of the team should understand exactly what their responsibilities and expectations are, and as their supervisor, you should work to help them reach those goals. When the time comes for the formal annual appraisal, there should be no surprises in that meeting. Your employee should see the process as the opportunity to review their progress towards goals that you have set together and then to set new goals for the coming year.

When handled well, effective appraisals are only a formal conversation about the things you've already discussed with the employee. It is a time for you to acknowledge the employee's contributions in an outlined procedure that is simply an official record of what you have been telling them on a regular basis. If there are performance issues, again, this should be no surprise to the employee. The effective appraisal becomes yet again just an official record of information you have already shared with the employee.

In either case, when appraisals are done effectively, the employee should actually look forward to the appraisal because it gives them the chance to share their own triumphs and their own input as to how the coming year should be structured with respect to goals and objectives. Imagine having a motivated team of individuals who know that you will be appraising their progress and performance honestly, with the intention of coaching them to better performance, and knowing that they also have a chance to share their own thoughts or ideas about their job.

Some people find the performance management aspect of supervising to be a difficult role to play. Some people in particular have difficulty when it comes to evaluating performance and writing performance appraisals. But when it's done well, the effective appraisal process is about partnership and motivation. If it's done from this perspective, there is nothing to be uncomfortable about. When this perspective is shared with your employees and they learn to see it that way, the appraisal process becomes a powerful tool that helps your team to become more successful.

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1.2 Benefits of the Appraisal Process

Before we look at specific ways of running effective appraisals in the following chapters, let's make sure the benefits of this aspect of performance management are clear:

- When performance is appraised based on clearly communicated roles and responsibilities, motivation is increased. If your team members know what they are supposed to be doing, and they know the way in which their performance will be judged, there is no loss of motion due to confusion or uncertainty. Instead, a motivated individual will be in action, and a team full of motivated individuals will feed off of each other and help keep that motivation going.

- When performance expectations are clearly communicated and regularly reinforced, employees are more likely to take ownership of their work and to be committed to the expected outcomes. They will be more likely to be willing to take risks, to put in extra effort, and to view their own role as that of a partnership with you and with the rest of the team.

- When you have clearly communicated goals and expectations, your team members each will be able to contribute to overall team effectiveness. With performance appraisals, a team is more likely to be accountable for their actions. Without it, they can be expected to flounder.

- The performance appraisal is a basic tool that helps you to develop your team members. You can use it to stretch their capabilities, to challenge them to step outside of their comfort zone. Doing so will provide opportunities for individual growth, which in turn will help to fuel their enthusiasm for their job.

- Using the performance appraisal to help employees develop will also help you to progress the individuals through the company. You can identify ways to build on strengths that the company needs – both in your division and in other areas.

- A solid, well-formed performance appraisal process gives you a powerful tool for addressing poor performance issues, should they arise. If you and your employee have agreed upon what their duties and responsibilities are, then you have something to refer to when they are not holding up their end of the agreement.

These benefits have all been listed from the point of view of the supervisor. But just as important is finding a way to communicate the benefits of performance appraisals to your employees. What are some of the benefits for the employee of well-structured and well-implemented performance appraisal process?

- The security of knowing they are doing the job they way you want it done – or understanding what they need to do differently

- A framework for gauging their own performance

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- An opportunity to toot their own horn or share their own concerns
- The chance to let you know where their interests in their future lie
- A continuing conversation with you regarding how to improve their skills and performance
- Knowing that they have control over their own performance results since they also know how their performance will be rated

These benefits are fully attainable for your team members – provided you have laid the foundation of a fair, consistent, clear, and achievable performance appraisal process. What would you need to hear or see from your own coach in order to see performance management and performance evaluation as benefits in your own job performance? Or another way of asking yourself this question is to consider what actions from your own supervisor would ruin the possibility that you could see the benefits of the process? Your actions (or lack thereof) will determine the attitude that your team members have towards the performance appraisal process.

> These benefits are attainable for your team when you lay the foundation of a fair, consistent, clear, and achievable performance management plan.

1.3 Laying the Foundation for Successful Performance Management

When you become a supervisor, unless you are leading an entirely new division or team, there will probably be some form of performance appraisal process in existence. It might seem easy and productive to simply enact what has been done before. We are all so pressured for time on the job that doing something like reviewing the basics of your performance appraisal process may easily slip to the back burner.

But look back a moment at the benefits we discussed in the last section. The only way for you to be certain that you and your team will experience those benefits is to review the existing process and make sure that it is set up as effectively as possible. Does the current system foster an environment of partnership and development, or does it perpetuate a negative perception of what a performance appraisal means? By taking the time to review the foundations of your performance appraisal process, you will be in an excellent position for reaping all of the possible benefits.

Assuming you're convinced of the need to do so, how do you ensure that you have a strong foundation for your performance appraisal process? It requires a series of steps, starting with evaluating the job itself. You can't define your expectations for your employees until you are certain that you know what those expectations should be. We'll look at how to do this in the next chapter.

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2. Laying the Foundation for Running Effective Appraisals

2.1 Introduction

Imagine for a moment that you have to hire someone for one of the positions on your team. What would the first step be? Ideally, you would review the job itself, including the competencies and skills that are necessary. When you have this information, then you would begin to look for a person who has the experience, skills, and abilities that are a good match for the job itself.

With an effective performance management and appraisal system, you would ideally be using that same information to measure and evaluate performance. You would look at the job description and the identified job duties and develop the criteria for measuring someone's performance from there.

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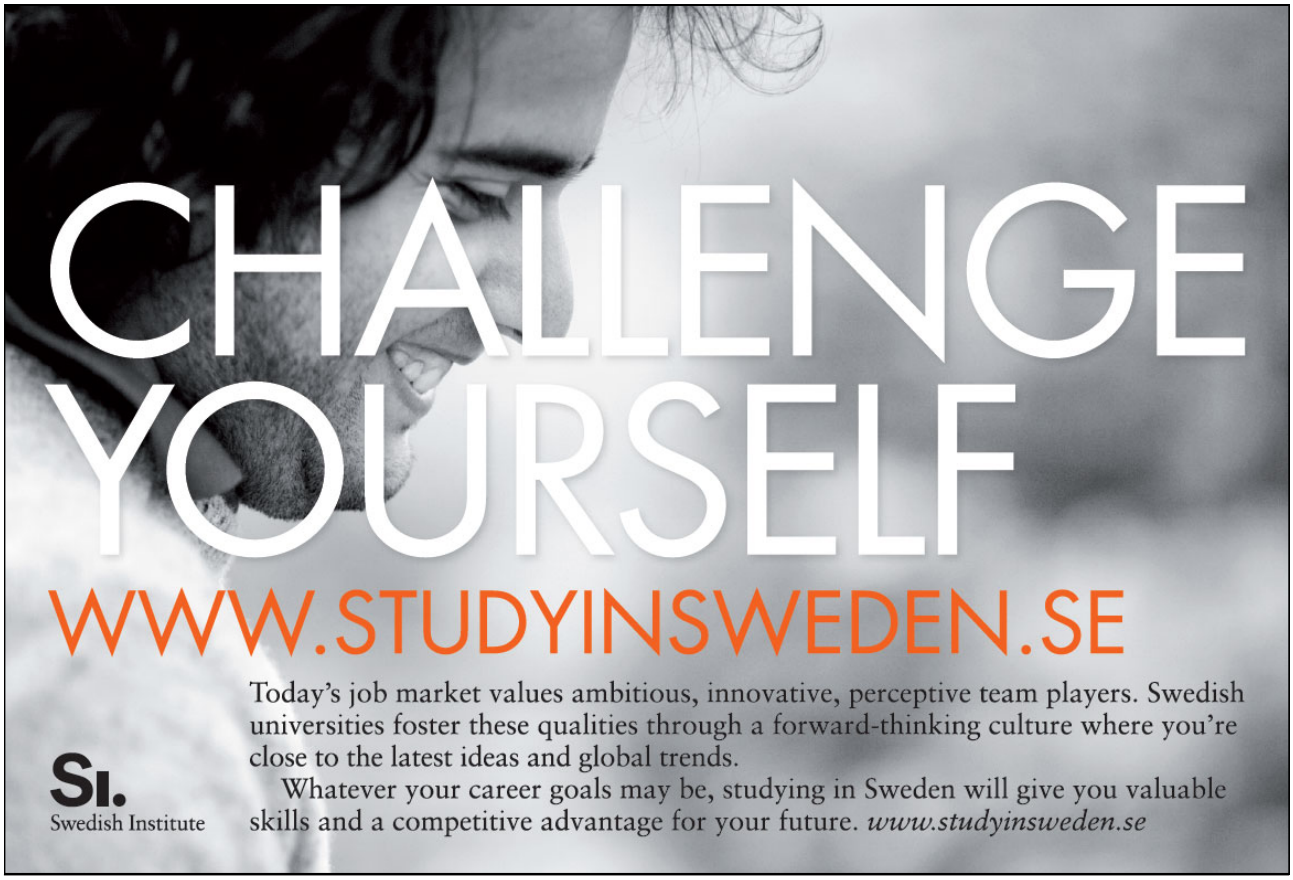

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2.2 Start with the Job Itself

You may already have a full team, but evaluating performance should still start with the job itself, not the person in the position. That's the only way you can be objective in evaluating performance across several people – the job specifics become your performance gauge. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Define the purpose of the job, the duties, and the responsibilities. Be sure that you can clearly identify how your employees will be measured on each of those aspects of their performance. Clearly define what is expected and what they are supposed to achieve.

- Review the responsibilities of current team members or of similar positions in other areas of the organization. How and what are they doing in the job? How are they evaluated?

- Does your organization have a job description for the position? How closely does it match what the job actually entails? Does it need to be updated? You should ideally have job descriptions that your employee can refer to or that you can refer to if you need to clarify what the position is supposed to be achieving.

- Research job descriptions online of similar positions – both inside your organization and in your competition's company. What information can you take from those descriptions to help you update yours?

- As you look at the job and the required functions, be certain that you are thinking about the role itself – and not the person who might currently be in the role. You should be considering what you need the position to do – not the current employees and whether or not they can do those things at this moment. Decide what the most important outcomes or results are that you need from that position.

Once you have completed this prep work, you should know what you need to expect from the position. Now you need to determine how you will coach your team members in order to meet those expectations.

In later chapters, we will look at specific models for coaching and performance appraisals for both individuals and teams. Yet whether you will choose one of those models or not, there are some basic steps that should be included in any performance management process. These will help ensure that your coaching leads to the outcomes you desire, that your team is able to see the benefits of the process, and that you are able to help them grow as you go.

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2.3 Lay the Groundwork with Your Team

Running an effective performance appraisal starts with communicating your intentions behind the performance approval process to your team. But just as important to your success with the performance appraisal process is that you follow through on what you communicate to your employees. Your behavior as a supervisor is what will determine whether or not your performance appraisal process goes as well as planned. Here are some tips to help you lay the groundwork with your team.

First, maintain consistency. Once you set performance targets, you need to act and evaluate according to them. If you tell your employees that you expect one thing but then evaluate them based on something else, your employees will lose trust in you as their supervisor and in the validity of your performance management process – not to mention your integrity as a leader.

> Maintain consistency. The targets you set for your team should be the same performance expectations that you use to evaluate them.

Certainly, there are times when the nature of the job or the goals of the organization may shift, requiring that you need to adjust performance targets. However, the reason for these changes should be made clear – and should remain as consistent as possible in the future.

Next, be sure to follow-through on your performance management process. If you tell your team that you will have quarterly performance evaluations, then be sure you have them. If you have as a goal for your employee that they learn a new skill, be sure that you provide them with the necessary training or resources. If you don't take your plan seriously and follow-through on what you said you would do, then you can't expect your employees to do so either.

If your attitude towards performance appraisals is one that focuses on the benefits and your actions mirror that attitude, then you employees will learn to appreciate the process. They will understand that performance management isn't about punishment or criticism – it's about growth, productivity, and success as a team.

What if you aren't certain exactly how to set up a performance management process? We'll look at some specific coaching and development models in the following chapters, but before you can supervise or coach anyone in their role, you need to lay the foundation for successful supervising by being sure that you understand exactly what you expect from your employees' performance.

2.4 Set Performance Goals and Measures

You cannot appraise someone's performance unless you have something to use as a measuring stick. Goal setting, specifically with identified measures, is important to setting yourself up for having something to appraise. The next chapter will focus on goal-setting and will give you two main goal-setting theories / systems to use.

2.5 Define Priorities and Performance Standards

Once goals are set, you need to define the priority of each job responsibility and goal. There will come a time when your employees face a choice of making one goal or responsibility a priority above the others. Are you confident that they would make the choice that you would expect? Priorities should be clear and reinforced as new situations come up. You cannot appraise someone's ability to prioritize their work if you have not communicated to your employees what you feel is the most important.

Next you need to determine the key performance areas of the job. Employees should understand that doing just the bare minimum is not what you expect. They should understand what your standards are and how you want them implemented. Granted, you won't necessarily be able to identify the exact level of excellence you expect for each performance areas, but you should be able to detail it for the key areas.

You cannot appraise someone's ability to prioritize their work if you have not communicated to your employees what you feel is the most important.

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2.6 Set Up a Process for Providing Feedback

Performance appraising is a year-round process. Sometimes we tend to think of the formal annual performance appraisal as the time to provide feedback. But leaving your discussions about performance to just once per year is setting your employees up for trouble. They should know at any time how well they are doing – or what they need to be working on. You should be providing performance feedback to your employees on a daily, weekly, and quarterly basis. Ideally, when the annual performance review does take place, there should be no surprises for the employee regarding what you say.

> Consider using a feedback system that incorporates information from peers, customers, subordinates, or any other people with whom your employees interact on a regular basis.

You can use a formal feedback system, asking them to rate the employee on the same expectations that you will be using, or you can make their feedback tool unique to their form of interacting with the employee. You should consider what tools are likely to get the best response; surveys are difficult to get back from many people and don't allow you to ask follow-up or clarifying questions. However, they can be useful for getting very specific information. Phone calls or personal visits take more time but will allow you to get more detailed information and specific examples of times when your employee performed well – or when he had performance issues.

2.7 Maintain Records

Be sure to maintain records that will support your performance appraisal process for both you and the employee. As the year goes on, make notes about contributions or problems that you see so that you can acknowledge or address them at your next feedback session. Annual reports can be used to show growth over time and to identify any trends of needed improvement that can tell you where you might need to concentrate your coaching efforts in the near future.

Encourage your employees to keep their own records of their contributions and achievements. They may receive accolades from customers or other colleagues that don't reach you directly. This gives them a chance to show you areas where they have had success. Plus, knowing that you will value that information will encourage them to behave in a way that they will continue to receive more appreciation.

There is another reason to maintain good records of performance. If the unfortunate situation should arise when you feel that you need to dismiss an employee, your written history of your efforts to correct any performance issues will be vital. You will be able to show:

- A trend of performance issues
- The fact that you addressed each of these issues with the employee over a period of time

- Any efforts you made to help the employee improve (additional training, coaching sessions, etc.)
- The proof that the performance issues continued despite your best efforts

Armed with this information, if you find yourself in the situation of needing to defend your decision, you will be in a much better position to do so.

2.8 Know How to Manage Poor Performance

In an ideal world, you would never have to deal with performance issues in a performance appraisal process. Yet you know that you will have to deal with them at some point. What that process involves should be clear to you and to your employees. When you have to give negative performance feedback, be sure that you have already developed a coaching and performance improvement plan when you first realize the employee is having a performance issue.

3. Goals as Measures for Appraising Performance

3.1 Introduction

Before you can run an effective appraisal, you have to know what you are appraising. How could you measure performance without knowing what your measures are? If you haven't clearly defined the way that you will be measuring performance, you will have a disastrous appraisal process that lacks objectivity and will leave both you and the employee you are evaluating frustrated – and worse, with no clear plan for improving performance helping your employee to grow in the future. In order to establish measures, you can use goal setting.

Goal setting is a powerful tool that can be used to motivate and challenge employees or yourself. Knowing that you have achieved a goal gives you a sense of accomplishment and gives you a way to keep track of what you have completed in the work place. It is also key in performance management because it gives you a way to measure performance that is objective and clear.

However, there is a right way and a wrong way to set goals. Well-set goals are clear and you can objectively determine whether or not the goal has been reached. Poorly set goals are not clear and you can't necessarily tell what it will look like once the goal has been achieved. The result is frustration and lack of effectiveness. We'll now look at two methods for goal setting that you can use in performance management and that you will then use for running effective appraisals when the time has come.

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Goal setting can be used in every type of work place and with every level of employee.

3.2 Locke and Latham's Goal Setting Theory

Dr. Edwin Locke published his theory on goal setting in 1968 in an article called "Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentives." His theory was that employees were motivated by having a goal to work towards and that reaching that goal improved work performance overall. He showed that people work better when their goals are specific and challenging rather than vague and easy.

For example, telling someone to 'improve customer service' is not specific. You might know what it means, but will the employee interpret it the same way? Instead, the goal should be clear, such as 'reduce customer complaints by 50% over a five month period by doing X, Y, and Z.' This might require that you also set some boundaries as to what should not be done when trying to set goals for your employees.

In 1990, Locke and Dr. Gary Latham published "A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance" in which they identified five principles that were important in setting goals that will motivate others. These principles are:

- Clarity
- Challenge
- Commitment
- Feedback
- Task complexity

We'll now look at each of these principles individually.

A clear goal is one that can be measured and leaves no room for misunderstanding. Goals should be very explicit regarding what behavior is desired and will be rewarded. Look at the goals listed in Figure 1 to help you understand how to be clearer when setting goals. Continue to ask yourself the question, 'What will it look like if the goal is completed?' The answer to the question will help you identify clear goals.

3.2.1 Clarity

A clear goal is one that can be measured and leaves no room for misunderstanding. Goals should be very explicit regarding what behavior is desired and will be rewarded. Look at the goals listed in Figure 1 to help you understand how to be clearer when setting goals. Continue to ask yourself the question, 'What will it look like if the goal is completed?' The answer to the question will help you identify clear goals.

> A clear goal is one that can be measured and leaves no room for misunderstanding.

3.2.2 Challenge

What would give you a greater sense of accomplishment: achieving an easy goal or achieving one that was a real challenge? We are motivated by the reward that we believe we will receive for completing tasks. So if we know that a goal is a challenge and is also perceived as such by those that assigned it to us, we are more likely to be motivated to achieve it.

Of course, there is a balance to be struck with this principle. A goal should be challenging, but must still be achievable. If I don't believe that I can meet a goal that you've given to me, I might not even be motivated to make an attempt. I will dread the goal rather than be motivated by it. You should also be sure that you have identified rewards that are appropriate for the achievement of challenging goals versus normal expectations. By positively rewarding the achievement of challenging goals, you encourage not just the achieving employee, but those other employees who witnessed the reward that was given for the achievement.

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We are motivated by the reward we believe we will receive for completing tasks.

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Figure 1: Examples of Clear Goals

3.2.3 Challenge

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> We are motivated by the reward we believe we will receive for completing tasks.

3.2.4 Commitment

In order for goals to be effective, they need to be agreed upon. The goal should be in line with the general, established expectations that you have had for the employee in the past. The employee and employer must both be committed to using the resources needed to complete the goal and should also agree on what the reward will be. For example, maybe you will allow the employee to become a mentor for a new employee if they take a specific training sequence in the coming year. Or maybe you will agree to put their name in for a promotion if they increase their sales by 10 percent.

This is the process of figuring out what the carrot is that you can dangle in front of the employee. It will take more time and energy on both parts initially, but it prevents an end result where the employee didn't have what he or she needed to have in order to be successful, or where the employer is frustrated by the employee's distaste for pursuing the goal.

This doesn't mean that you have to get an employee's absolute agreement to every goal that you set for them before setting it. But it does help to gain general agreement if the employee is involved in setting the goals. Allow them to participate in the conversation about what is needed in order to complete the goal, how much time it will take, and any other ways that you can let them participate in decision making about their performance.

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You could also ask employees to create their own goals for themselves and then discuss them as a team. You might not be aware that someone wants to improve their skills in a certain area or learn more about a specific process. Letting them take on something that they want to learn and feel challenged by will give them more motivation to do the needed work to achieve their other goals as well.

> The employee and employer must both be committed to using the resources needed to complete the goal.

You could also ask employees to create their own goals for themselves and then discuss them as a team. You might not be aware that someone wants to improve their skills in a certain area or learn more about a specific process. Letting them take on something that they want to learn and feel challenged by will give them more motivation to do the needed work to achieve their other goals as well.

3.2.5 Feedback

Goal setting is not going to be effective if there is not an opportunity for feedback – and not just during a once-a-year proposal. Feedback should be an ongoing process throughout the year. What if the person is halfway to completing the goal but they have a question? What if you suspect that the person is going about the process of completing the goal in the wrong way? Feedback is a chance to correct or clarify before the goal has been reached.

Ideally, feedback is a type of progress reporting. It gives the supervisor the chance to clarify expectations and to adjust the level of difficulty of the goal if it seems it's too hard or too easy. For the employee, it offers a chance to make sure they are meeting their supervisor's expectations and to get recognition for what they have achieved up to this point. When the goal has been reached, you can also conduct a formal feedback session so that you can discuss what went well and what could use improvement in the future.

3.2.6 Task Complexity

The final principle in Locke and Latham's goal setting theory is related to the level of complexity of the assigned task. When a role is complex or highly technical, the person in that role is often already highly motivated or else they wouldn't have reached that level in their organization.

However, even the most motivated person can become discouraged if the complexity of the task and the time it would take to complete it wasn't fully understood. Projects can have the tendency to reveal themselves as being more complex after they have begun, so both the employee and supervisor need to be in communication about how involved a task has become.

> Even the most motivated person can become discouraged if the complexity of the task wasn't fully understood.

In complex or technical work environments, it's important to make sure that the person has enough time to reach the goal. Unreasonable time expectations will drive a person to overwhelm themselves with work and become less effective as the stress level increases. You may also have to take into account the time necessary to allow for a learning curve or to ramp up their existing skills.

3.3 S.M.A.R.T. Goals

In goal setting, there is one method that has stood the test of time – SMART goals. Although there have been variations in what the acronym stands for over time, the main definition of a SMART goal is one that is:

- Specific
- Measurable

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- Attainable
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- Timely

3.3.1 Specific

When a goal is specific, then you have clearly identified what it is that you expect to be accomplished. If you can't say specifically what you want to achieve, then how can you expect yourself or a subordinate to be able to achieve it? A specific goal will answer the questions:

- Who? Who is taking action or is affected? Is it just the employee or will other people be involved in reaching the goal?
- What? What is the result I want the employee to achieve? What is the overall result that I have in mind when I am asking the employee to achieve this goal?
- Where? Is there a specific location?
- When? When do I want to complete this goal?
- Which? Are there restraints or requirements that have to be met? Have I clearly identified them for the employee?
- Why? Why is this important? What specifically is the benefit of achieving this goal?

For example, let's say that you want your employee to improve in customer relations. If you are using SMART goal setting criteria, that's not specific enough. If you answer the questions above, however, it becomes much more specific:

- Who – customers whose accounts the employee is assigned to (currently 750)
- What – I want the employee to be the person that my customers think of first when they need to talk to someone about internet technology. I will know this is happening when the employee receives at least 20% more inbound customer calls each month. The employee will email and then call all 750 customers to re-introduce himself and our services.
- Where – In the five states where the employee currently has customers.
- When – Within six months.

- Which – Starting with customers that the employee has not heard from in more than a year.
- Why – To increase sales, reduce customer complaints, and increase customer satisfaction.

3.3.2 Measurable

Each goal that you set for employees should be measurable so that you have a means of ascertaining how far along the employee is in reaching the goal as well as when the goal will be complete. If you have a measure for an entire project, as in our example above of reaching 750 customers, then you can also determine how much of an employee's daily work load should be dedicated to achieving the goal. This will help you break your goals down for use in day-to-day performance management – and the sum of this goal gives you the end measure for determining how successful the employee was at completing this particular project or requirement.

Not all goals have measures that are readily obvious. For example, if you want someone to get better at writing a certain report, how can you measure that? Ask yourself these questions to help you identify what the measures could be for each goal:

- How much?
- How much less?
- How many?
- How many less?
- How often?
- How much less often?
- What rate of reduction (in errors, mistakes, issues, complaints)
- What rate of increase (in productivity, repeat business, retention, etc)

Or, just answer the question, "How will I know when the employee has reached the goal?" If you can come up with a clear picture of how you will know when your employee has reached the goal, then you are ready to motivate them by using the goal.

Going back to our example of how to write measures when you want someone to get better at writing a specific report, depending on the type of report we're talking about, you could decide on measures like:

- A percent reduction in spelling and grammar errors
- A percent change in the length of the report
- A percent rate of the time that the correct format is followed
- A percent change in the amount of data, charts, or other visual figures
- A percent reduction in the number of times you have to return the report to them for corrections (or a number that is the limit of times you have to return said report to them in a month, quarter, etc.)

It might require some creative thinking for you to come up with appropriate measures, but every goal can have them. Just be sure that the measures are objective; that is, that anyone taking the measures would get the same result when looking at the results.

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3.3.3 Attainable

As we saw in the last section, having a measure for your goals is the key to being able to appraise an employee's performance. But before they begin working, you need to be certain that the goal is truly attainable. What if in the example in the "Specific" section you had said that you wanted to see a 20% increase in inbound calls in just six weeks? How would your plan for reaching the goal have changed? Given your existing resources and the workload that you have to maintain while reaching for the goal, would that even have been possible?

If a goal is not attainable given the constraints that you face, you either need to work towards removing those restraints or lowering the level of the goal so that it becomes attainable.

If a goal is not attainable given the constraints that you face, you either need to work towards removing those restraints or lowering the level of the goal so that it becomes attainable. Otherwise, you aren't setting up the possibility of appraising performance – you're guaranteeing that your employee will fail.

3.3.4 Realistic

If a goal is to be realistic for your employees, it must be something that you are willing and able to work towards with them. This doesn't mean that all of the goals you set for your employees have to be low and simple. It just means that you have done a thorough analysis of the task at hand and you have come to the conclusion that the goal is realistic. Some questions you could ask yourself during this analysis include:

- Do I have the resources (financial, personnel, equipment, etc.) to provide to my employees to help them reach the goal?
- Do I have the support of others in the department and the organization? Do my employees?
- What knowledge or expertise is the employee lacking that I will need to locate or learn?
- Have I reviewed my employees' existing workload to prioritize this goal with existing goals?

In some version of SMART goals, the R actually stands for 'relevant.' In this case, you are comparing the goal to the overall mission of the organization and to the personal goals, objectives, and roles of the employee. Is the goal something that your team should actually be completing or is it better suited for someone else? Will it improve the employee's overall skills and ability to do his or her job? If not, why are you asking them to pursue it?

3.3.5 Timely

The final component of the SMART goals strategy is 'timely.' Without adding a time restriction to your goals, you don't have the necessary motivation to get going as soon as possible. Adding a realistic time boundary lends a sense of urgency to your goal and will help to keep you focused. Since organizations change regularly, so can goals. Making sure your goal is set with a time limit also ensures that you complete the goal while it is still relevant to what you are doing on the job.

Adding a realistic time boundary lends a sense of urgency to your goal and will help to keep you focused.

4. Preparing the Performance Appraisal

4.1 Introduction

When time comes for you to conduct the performance appraisal, there are two phases. The preparation phase and the delivery phase. During the preparation phase, you will:

- Determine what each rating level would 'look like' for each criteria
- Review your records of the employee's performance
- Review any feedback you've collected from others about the employee's performance
- Ask the employee for any information they have about their own performance (letters or emails from customers, any achievements they feel are important)
- Compare the employee's performance to the measures you established for each goal

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- Create a draft copy of your appraisal form that includes your first thoughts on ratings and comments justifying the ratings

- Determine the goals that you want the employee to pursue in the next appraisal period.

The delivery phase is actually a three-part phase:

- First, you will have a meeting with the employee to review the appraisal form and to explain your comments.

- You will allow a period of time for the employee to review the information you shared with them and then you will have a second meeting with the employee to hear any additional information that they might have which you might not have considered yet.

- If there is any information they shared which affects your ratings or comments, you will then make the changes to the form before meeting with the employee to explain your final decision and to allow them to sign the appraisal and add any comments.

Is this process really necessary? Yes, it is if you want to have an effective appraisal and reap all of the benefits that the performance appraisal process offers. It does take time; obviously, you need at least two meetings with each employee in addition to your preparation time. But if you are committed to being as effective as possible and to using the performance appraisal as a tool to manage and develop employee performance, then you need to allow your employee the opportunity to provide input into the process.

4.2 The Preparation Phase

The preparation phase is entirely devoted to determining rankings for each criterion and then writing comments that justify your ratings. If you can't justify the rating, why is that what you've determined to give the employee? To do this, you'll need to first know what performance level is required to achieve each rating level. Then you would review information from several sources, determine your rating, and then use the information you reviewed in order to justify the rating that you have determined.

> You'll need to first know what performance level is required to achieve each rating level.

4.2.1 Determine Performance Rating Requirements

Just like when you were setting measures for employees, you need to determine what level of achievement of those measures will correspond to each rating that you could give the employee. For example, suppose you have a rating system that allows you to give each criterion one of the following ratings:

- 1 – Fails to meet expectation
- 2 – Partly meets expectation
- 3 – Meets expectation
- 4 – Exceeds expectation
- 5 – Greatly exceeds expectation

Now let's say that the criterion you are considering has been well-written so that you have specific measures. So perhaps the criterion was dealing with customer service and read:

> *Greets customers within two minutes of the customer entering the store 95 percent of the time. Processes at least 80 percent of customer transactions within five minutes. Received no more than one customer complaint per quarter.*

If these are the expectations expected for this employee, then achieving them would normally mean a rating of three. You would need to determine how you would rate someone who had more than one complaint, or someone who had zero complaints. What about someone who processes 90 percent of customer transactions within four minutes?

You might not be able to make every distinction of the rating you will use immediately. But you can make an estimate until you finish rating each person who has the same job description.

4.2.2 Review Records

Just like when you're writing any kind of report, you want to have done your research and gathered relative information. As you review the different criteria that you use to appraise the employee, read through the information that you have kept in your records about the employee's performance. Look for instances that provide information specific to each criterion.

You should also ask for supporting information from your employee at this time. If you haven't already done so, give them a blank copy of the appraisal form that shows the criteria you will be using, but not any other information. Allow them to bring you any documents or write any information that they think is

important. Assure them that they will also get a chance to review a draft of your appraisal before it becomes final. At this time you would also ask for feedback from other sources, if appropriate.

4.2.3 Ranking Performance

When you begin a performance appraisal, there is a temptation to immediately think of your employees in terms of a rank order. However, this is dangerous thinking. It can lead to subjectivity rather than objectivity. It can lead you to rate an employee differently on each criterion than you would if you were thinking of them individually. Though it is true that you will have employees that out-perform other employees, you need to remember that everyone has strengths and weaknesses.

> If you immediately think of your employees in terms of rank order, it can lead to subjectivity rather than objectivity.

The only time that you should consider a ranking of any kind is when you are analyzing the performance of one or more employees who are performing the exact same job. Even then, it can be difficult to justify using any kind of ranking since the employees have likely had different levels of experience in the job.

So instead, start by examining the employee's performance against each measure you've established. Only after you have established what you believe is a fair rating for each criteria should you consider comparing employee performance between employees that have the same job description. And you should only make a comparison between one criterion at a time – not between the employees as a whole.

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4.2.4 Justifying Your Ratings

When you give your employee a rating on each criterion, you need to justify your rating with a comment that is clear and precise. If you give the employee a two out of five, you need to explain why. Be sure that you give clear information – not generalizations. For example, do not write:

Employee did not meet the expectation all of the time.

That information doesn't help the employee at all. It doesn't tell them exactly what they need to change. A justifying comment would be:

> *Employee met expectation approximately 60 percent of the time. To reach a rating of three, the employee needs to meet the expectation at least 80 percent of the time for at least six months out of the year.*

Now the employee knows exactly what she needs to do to improve her ratings next time. There is no mystery – and no reason for her to complain if she doesn't get a three (or higher) on her next performance appraisal.

4.2.5 Goals for the Next Appraisal Period

The effective performance appraisal is not just about evaluating the performance of the last period. It is also an opportunity for you to identify goals that you (and the employee) would like the employee to pursue in the coming year. If the goals will change the criteria that you use to evaluate the employee's performance in the future, be sure that you remember that information for the next appraisal period.

4.3 The Delivery Phase

Now comes the part that many supervisors dread, though if they are intending to help the employee develop with the performance appraisal, then there should be nothing to dread. Remember that your attitude is important in this phase because the employee will be responding to whatever cues you are giving off. By letting the employee see the draft review before it becomes final, you will help to eliminate some of the anxiety on both sides.

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4.3.1 The First Meeting

During the first meeting, you will review each criterion, your rating, and the comments that you wrote to justify your ratings. We'll talk about how to handle any feedback that could be perceived as negative in the next chapter. Allow the employee time for questions or comments, but don't allow the meeting to turn into a gripe session. Let them know that you want them to take the appraisal, consider your comments, and prepare any additional information that they have that they want you to consider.

Take the time during this first meeting to discuss the goals that you might have for the employee in the future. Remember that this should be a collaborative process, not a dictatorial one, ideally. Allow the employee to share with you what his or her personal goals might be. This is the chance for you to demonstrate that, no matter what your appraisal has determined, you are committed to the professional growth of the employee.

4.3.2 The Second Meeting

After a reasonable amount of time, meet again with the employee to hear whatever they have come up with regarding your appraisal. Use active listening skills so that the employee knows that you are truly interested in what they have to say. Active listening skills include:

1. **Pay close attention.**

   With this step, you learn to give the employee your undivided attention. But you also let the him or her know that you are listening by using acknowledgements – types of verbal and non-verbal tools that help add proof that you are truly listening.

   - Look the employee in the eyes
   - Stop any mental chatter
   - Don't start preparing your response or rebuttal while the employee is talking
   - Make sure your environment doesn't distract you
   - Notice the employee's body language and tone of voice – what are the non-verbal messages telling you?

2. **Demonstrate physically that you are listening.**

Use non-verbal and verbal signals that you are listening to the employee attentively.

- Nod from time to time, when appropriate
- Use appropriate facial expressions
- Monitor your own body language. Be sure you remain open and relaxed rather than closed and tense.
- Use small comments like uh-huh, yes, right.

3. **Check for understanding.**

Before responding, it's important to check for understanding using these tools:

- Use reflecting and paraphrasing. Check that you heard the message correctly by saying things like "what I hear you saying is…." or "If I'm hearing you correctly, you're saying….." or "I think you're talking about….".

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- Ask questions that will help clarify the employee's meaning. Suggestions include things like, "Can you tell me more about…..?" or "What did you mean when you said…?" or "I think you're saying… is that right?"

- Summarize what you've heard occasionally – don't wait until the end or you might not remember exactly what was said.

4. **Don't interrupt!**

   There is nothing good that comes from interrupting. You will only be limiting your chance of understanding the message because you won't hear it all – and because the employee will get frustrated!

5. **Respond Appropriately.**

   When you are actively listening, you are showing your respect for the employee, as well as gaining the information that you need to form your response. Once you have that information and have clarified it, it's time to form your reply. When expressing your thoughts:

   - Be honest and open
   - Be respectful
   - Be thorough

As you listen to the employee, if something is revealed that makes you think you need to change one of your ratings, make notes of what the information was and let the employee know that you will make a change and have a short third meeting to give them another copy of the appraisal once the changes have been made. If you don't feel that any changes are appropriate, you can communicate this to the employee as well. Give the employee the appraisal and allow them to write any comments they have before signing it.

5. Understanding Poor Performance

5.1 Introduction

When you are appraising performance, you are going to have some excellent performers, some poor performers, and some average performers. When you have a poor performer, you need to try to understand why they might not already be performing at the level that you would like them to in order to help them develop into a better performer.

> Your ability to identify the reasons for poor performance and then tap into the potential of a person is what will distinguish an effective performance appraisal from an ineffective one.

We will first assume that any employee you have is someone with the desire to perform well. This intention is necessary for you to successfully coach anyone; even if the intention is hidden beneath a poor attitude. Your ability to identify the reasons for poor performance and then tap into the potential of a person is what will distinguish an effective performance appraisal from an ineffective one.

In other words, a great supervisor is someone who makes the poor performance of an employee his or her own responsibility. He is someone who looks at poor performance as a failure to provide some information, example, encouragement, or other resource to his employees. He recognizes that poor performers are good performers who have not yet been tapped for their potential, and he makes a plan to coach that employee towards reaching that potential. In essence, this is what an effective performance appraisal takes.

In addition, a truly effective supervisor is willing to consider that he might be part of the employee's performance problem. This is actually good news because as a result you as the supervisor are actually part of the solution. You are also able to recognize that there are sometimes when poor performance may not be resolvable, and that in these instances, a job relationship may need to end.

5.2 Common Reasons for Poor Performance

There are a number of common reasons for poor performance in an employee, though every situation and every person is different. But the only way to get someone performing at peak levels is to find and understand their reasons. Following are some of the most common reasons.

- They lack the required capabilities.

  In this situation, the employee simply doesn't have the needed capabilities to perform the job. They might not have asked for help, or they might have asked but not received it for some reason.

They might feel as if they should know it or be able to do it, and so they have tried to keep working without the needed capabilities.

Improved performance will not be possible unless you can help this employee to acquire the needed capabilities. You may need to arrange for training programs, one-on-one assistance from another employee, or dedicated time with you in order to help get them to the right place. But the important thing to realize in this situation is that if it is not rectified, frustration will grow – and performance will continue to suffer.

- The job isn't challenging enough.

In this case, your employee is simply bored. Perhaps they have more capabilities than you have realized and that haven't been put to use. Boredom can manifest itself in several ways; poor attendance, poor attitude, and poor performance.

Improving performance with this person will require that you find a way to end the boredom. Ask them to help train new employees, or get them involved on committees or team projects that let them learn about other areas of the company. If boredom isn't addressed, a poor attitude will eventually develop, followed by possible shirking of responsibilities.

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- They feel they aren't appreciated.

  No one wants to feel that they aren't appreciated. Most of us need to get some kind of affirmation from our work and in fact, a portion of our self-esteem is based on getting that affirmation. Employees who don't feel that they are properly appreciated – whether with money, opportunities, or just words of acknowledgement – are bound to have performance issues eventually.

  This is one area in which you can take effective action as a manager. Ask yourself if you have been providing enough positive feedback. You might need to provide more appreciation to some employees than others, and perhaps more than you would normally provide. If you think the problem is that they feel undercompensated, have a frank discussion regarding what would be required in order to receive increased compensation. Is it a matter of time? Producing certain results? Or is it a budgetary issue that is out of your hands? Speak plainly, and only make promises that you are certain you can keep.

- They feel they've been overlooked in some way.

This is a similar situation to the previous one of feeling under-appreciated, except that this situation is usually specific to feeling as if they have not been provided

  with certain opportunities. They may believe that they have been overdue for a promotion, a position of some status, or some other perk that others have received.

  Again, you have an opportunity here to take action, beginning with asking yourself whether or not there is validity to their concern. Have you somehow overlooked the employee? Examine your thoughts about their abilities and their skills. Have you failed to give them the same opportunities as you have given to others? If so, try to understand why. Is there some prejudice on your side, or is there something actually lacking in their performance? Honest examination of the situation will help you identify your next steps.

- They don't get along with their colleagues.

  Most of us spend more time with our work colleagues than we do with our family or friends. If we don't get along with our colleagues, that's a lot of our lives that will be spent in unpleasant situations. If an employee feels like an outsider or as if he is not liked, or if he feels he has no support from his team members, then your employee is lacking a necessary resource to be able to perform at capacity.

As the team leader, you have a responsibility to foster a supportive team environment where all of your employees at least respect and are considerate of each other even if they can't actually like each other. But there's another reason to foster this kind of environment – your whole team will work better, which will in turn produce overall better results for you. You may need to bring the team together and flesh out the root of the problems and clear out any resentment.

- They have personal problems

  Life goes on, even during the work week. All of us have times when our personal lives have encroached on our professional lives. Perhaps we needed to take or make more personal calls than normal or take time off at inconvenient times. Or maybe our performance has suffered because we are nervous, distracted, or upset.

  The good news is that this type of performance issues is often temporary. Once the problem is resolved, the performance issue is resolved as well. Identify whether or not there are resources available that can assist your employee through this time period. For example, some organizations offer employee assistance programs that involve temporary counseling or even temporary financial assistance. Don't wait until you have an employee with a personal problem to find out what resources are available in your organization – find out before you need the information so you are prepared.

  There may be some personal problems that you cannot address in the workplace. For example, you may have a zero tolerance program for drug and alcohol use in the workplace. Again, be certain that you are aware of your options and your responsibilities so that you protect yourself from any legal response as well.

- They've developed an attitude

  A negative attitude is a sign that something is wrong but is not usually the problem itself. When you have an employee with a negative attitude, your goal should be to discover what is causing the attitude. It could be any one of the other reasons for poor performance mentioned here or it could be something else all together. We'll talk more about handling an employee with a poor attitude at the end of this chapter.

- They lack the motivation

  If an employee doesn't see the reason for performing at the level you expect, she is not going to meet your expectations. Lacking motivation means that she lacks the drive to do her best. This lack of motivation can also be a symptom of another problem; for example, if an employee feels that she isn't appreciated, why would she try even harder? If an employee feels her previous efforts have been overlooked, why should she keep trying?

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If your employee is not motivated, you have the chance to find what will motivate them. Once you identify what it is that will get your employee excited and enthusiastic about their work, you will resolve this performance issue. We'll talk more about motivating employees in a later chapter.

- The job isn't right for them

In the end, there are some times when the lack of performance is due to the fact that the job and the employee are simply not right for each other. You may try to work with the employee and improve their performance, but nothing seems to work. In these cases, you may need to accept that the job is simply a bad fit for the employee.

You have several options in this situation. You can attempt to find another position for the employee within the organization, you can attempt to reorganize job duties in order to make the job a better fit, or you can decide that it is time for the employee to move on. We'll discuss this situation more later on.

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These are the main reasons that an employee may have a performance issue, but remember that there are others. Also realize that what you think is the problem at first glance may not actually be the issue at all. You will need to be willing to have open communication with your employee in order to identify the root cause. Only when you understand why the employee is having trouble with performing up to standard will you be able to help them get there.

5.3 More Discussion on Attitude Problems

When you have an employee who has a bad attitude, we discussed that it is often a symptom of another problem. You are confident that this employee is able to do the job, that they have the needed skills and abilities, but for some reason they are not currently doing so.

The problem with a bad attitude is that it can become infectious. If one person is focusing on the negative aspects of a situation, being sarcastic about your attempts at motivation, attempting to sabotage the team's efforts, or in other ways having a negative impact on the team, they may eventually affect other individuals with their negative thinking. The team's performance as a whole will suffer. If you don't handle a poor attitude, you will soon have more poor attitudes to deal with.

This situation is complicated by the fact that in most cases, someone with a bad attitude will not admit to or even recognize that they have a bad attitude. This makes it important for you to control your approach. When you first approach someone with your concerns about their attitude, some common responses are:

- I don't have a bad attitude – I'm just being realistic
- This is just who I am
- I am just saying what everyone else is thinking
- I have this attitude because of others, this organization, or you as a manager
- I don't see what the big deal is
- Other people say these things and you don't say anything to them

The key to addressing a poor attitude is to focus on the effects that specific behaviors are having on the team. It would be easier for you to be general and just say, 'you're attitude is having a negative impact on the team.' But that won't be productive and doesn't give the employee anything specific to work on.

Instead, you need to isolate the specific behaviors and what the result of those behaviors is. A good form of communication to use it a pattern of 'when you (specific behavior), it (specific results). For example, you might say:

When you speak in that tone of voice, it sounds very aggressive and it makes your teammates uncomfortable and unwilling to express their own opinions.

When you make negative comments about your team member it causes him to feel as if he is not a valued member of the team, which impacts his performance.

When you talk to me with that sarcastic tone, it makes me feel that you don't respect me or my role as the leader of this team. It makes our relationship strained, when it could be a mutually supportive partnership instead.

The next step is to suggest that they try seeing what difference changing that behavior will produce. For the first example above, ask them to try changing the tone of their voice in the meeting and seeing what happens. Once they see the difference their new behavior makes, both for themselves and for others, they will be more likely to adjust their behavior in the future on their own.

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6. Performance Improvement Models

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we'll be looking at some specific methods for coaching individuals to better performance on the areas you have identified in your performance appraisal. These models can be put in to use in a modified form for corrective performance management, but are also excellent for simply coaching a high-performing employee into even higher levels of performance. There is no one correct way of establishing performance improvement strategies, but it should be done as part of the performance appraisal process so that the employee sees the connection between how you appraise them now and what they need to do in order to be appraised differently.

6.2 The GROW Model

The GROW model was developed by Graham Alexander and John Whitmore. The name is an acronym, with each letter standing for a different phase of the model. GROW stands for:

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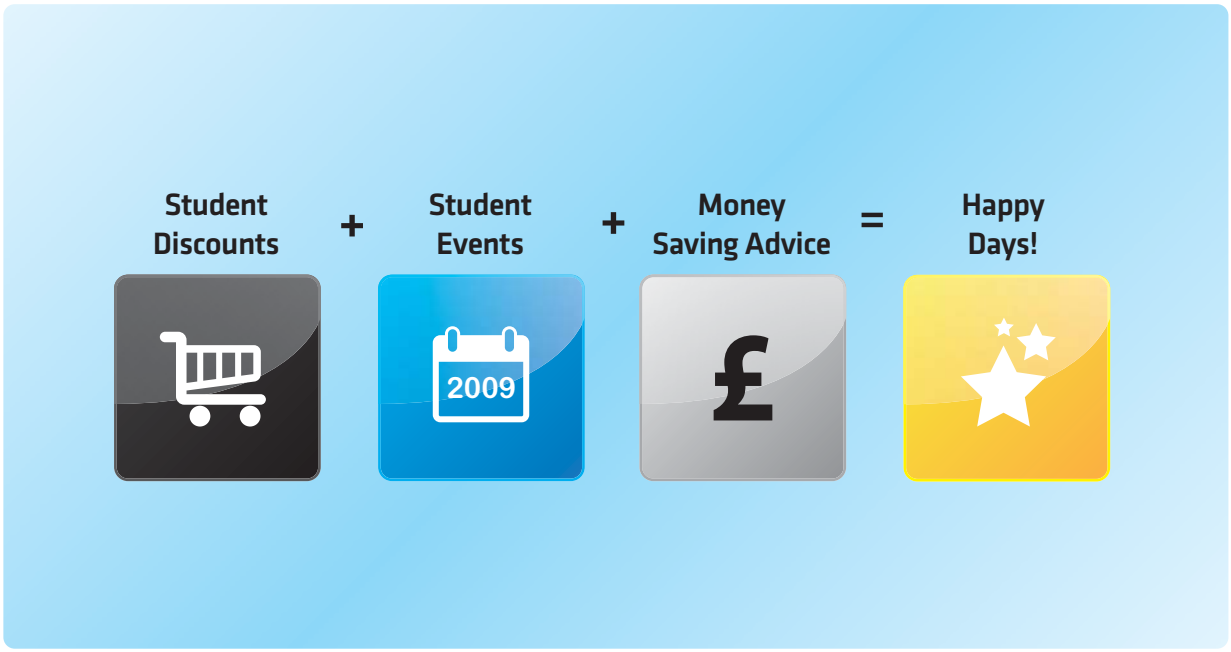

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G – Goal

R – Reality

O – Options

W – Way Forward

6.2.1 Goal

Goal refers to the objective or target for the team member. This is not just a list of goals that you give them – it should be a mutually agreed-upon vision of the future for that employee. This conversation helps them understand exactly what their objectives should be. Certainly, you could address some of their present or recent past behavior, but you should focus on where the employee should be going from this point forward.

The individual employee might not be able to express exactly what goals they have for themselves in the future. You can help them by exploring their personal goals, which can provide some interesting information for you. It also gives you a chance to reinforce the benefits of a performance management process as a way to help them achieve those goals.

Some questions you might ask the employee regarding their key performance measures include:

- What do you hope to achieve in this area?
- When do you hope to achieve it?
- What would success in this area look like to you?
- What would be indicators that you are having problems in this area?
- How can I help you avoid those problems?
- If I were to coach you exactly in the way you would like to be coached, what would that look like?

But the goal step can go beyond the employee's performance in their current position. You can also explore what they aspire to in the long-term with the organization or in their professional life in general. Some questions that might help you with this goal conversation are:

- What would you like to have achieved in this position or organization in a year from now? Two years from now? Five years from now?

- Are there any opportunities in the organization that you know are available but that you haven't taken advantage of yet that you would like to pursue in the coming year?

- Are there any work skills that you know you would like to develop more in the coming year that I can help you with?

Just having these conversations can lead to a new level of motivation for your employees. Imagine you learn that one of your employees wishes they were better at public speaking. Perhaps you could find opportunities for him or her to practice by training other employees on a new product or service. When you show employees that you want to help them achieve their own goals in addition to achieving the goals required of them, you will find that your employees truly become your partners in managing their own performance.

6.2.2 Reality

Reality means taking an inventory of where you are now in relation to where your employee is now in relation to the goals that you have identified together. This helps you to ascertain exactly what you need to complete the journey ahead.

Reality can be a deceptively simple concept. In the sense of an employee's performance, she may have a completely different idea of where her performance level is at this point. She could feel that

she has performed at a higher level than you do, or she could not see herself as having met up to the expectations you have previously set. You may need to discuss and explain your perspective on her current performance level before you can begin planning for her movement towards the goals. At the same time, you need to be willing to listen to her perspective on her performance. There may be miscommunication, misunderstanding, or some other unresolved barrier to being on the same page when it comes to identifying the reality of the current situation. Remember that this is not necessarily a negative step. Sure, you might have to correct some misconceptions about current performance, but it's also a chance for you to show appreciation for high performance levels and improvements.

Additionally, you should be able to identify how her performance level got to the current point. What actions have you as a coach taken that have contributed to her current level of performance. What actions have you not taken? Before you ask the same questions of her, be sure that you have considered the answers to them about your own role.

6.2.3 Options

Options refers to the various ways that there are to move from reality to the goal. During this step, you look at the gap between where we are and where we want to get to, and look at what alternatives we have to get there. The team member can assist by discussing what options might be available to them and ascertaining which ones would be most effective.

Some of the options for the journey to the goal may include:

- Training
- More Coaching
- Mentoring – the team member could be the mentor or the mentee
- Personal reading or research
- Increasing education level
- Increasing experience level
- Job enhancements such as increasing responsibility

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These are just a few examples – the exact options you choose will depend entirely upon the employee you're working with and the goals you have come up with together. When you have determined what options you feel would be best, you are ready to go to the last step of the GROW model.

6.2.4 Way Forward

This step is when you and the team member come up with an action plan for exactly how the chosen options will be implemented. During this process you will need to agree on:

- Specific timelines and deadlines
- Detailed deliverables and expectations
- Resources that will be provided or made available
- What level of help and supervision the coach will provide
- When and how progress will be communicated

When the final step is completed, your team member will be ready to be in action. You should both now be clear on what, when, and how the goal will be accomplished, and you've established a support schedule when you can make sure that things are proceeding as planned or make any corrections to performance that are needed.

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6.3 The OUTCOMES Model

There are some similarities between the OUTCOMES model and the GROW model, though of course the former is more detailed. OUTCOMES stands for:

O – Objectives

U – Understand

T – Take Stock

C – Clarify

O – Options Generation

M – Motivation to Action

E – Enthusiasm and Encouragement

S – Support

6.3.1 Objectives

This step is similar to the G in the GROW model. In this stage you are working to understand what the team member is trying to achieve. You will attempt to get an idea of what specifically the person is trying to achieve from either the coaching session or their objectives. Again, this is a conversation and a learning process, not just a directive.

6.3.2 Understand

Understanding the reasons behind wanting to achieve the identified objectives is what is required during this step. This is a vital step. More often than not, employees either ‘under-stretch’ or ‘over stretch’ their objectives. In sales, for example, one of the main under stretches is wanting to simply build rapport and fact-find within a sales call as opposed to actually sell anything on a first visit. By understanding the reasons behind the ‘rapport’ objective, a manager can support and challenge a salesperson to achieve both those objectives together with starting the selling process.

6.3.3 Take Stock

This step is similar to the Reality step in the GROW model. Your goal is to take stock of the current situation. It’s important to spend time analyzing the present situation so that a manager can establish a performance ‘baseline.’ And then from that baseline, you have something to measure change in performance by.

6.3.4 Clarify

Clarify refers to clarifying the gap between where the team member is now and where they need to get to in order to achieve their objective. Sometimes with the GROW model an inexperienced coach or manager can perhaps jump from Reality to Options without fully understanding the gap that has to be crossed or filled. They can go straight to the how without fully understanding the what. By clarifying, you make sure that you are both in agreement as to exactly what the change, progress, or development is that needs to happen.

6.3.5 Options Generation

Similar to the Options in GROW, in this step the goal is generating all the possible options for moving forward. While the first options to occur may seem like the best, this step should involve some brainstorming. How many managers ask: "if there was one other way you could do it, what would it be?" The pros and cons of each option need to be discussed. This stage can take time and many managers just go through the motions, or worse, manipulate their employee with leading questions that enable the person to come up with the options the manager wants to hear. Instead, take your time and allow the person to generate their own options.

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6.3.6 Motivation to Action

Once the options have been discussed and the best way forward agreed, the manager must check the motivation of the person to move on the actions. Are they agreeing to actions because that is what they think the manager wants to hear or are they really motivated to move on the actions? The manager must have the ability to check this and challenge any signs of demotivation.

6.3.7 Enthusiasm and Encouragement

This stage and the one that follows are ones that continue through the rest of the coaching process. The manager must at all times show enthusiasm for the objectives ahead and encourage the person to do as best they can. If you falter in your enthusiasm and encouragement, you will risk the team member becoming demotivated very easily.

6.3.8 Support

The manager must always show support for the team member in the tasks agreed upon and must also ask if there is any support that they need in order to assist the team member. An example of this could be a sales executive asking their sales manager to sit in on a sales call and be ready to answer any difficult questions the customer may ask.

Recognize as well that there may be times when the performance plan that you've been coaching your employee through will need to change as the organization changes. It will be your role to support the team member through any alterations to their activities in order to come into alignment with the new needs and priorities.

6.4 The Personal Development Program (PDP)

In this section, we'll look at some specific steps you can take when you meet with the team member to review the goals you have established. These steps can be used during the formal appraisal meetings but also during feedback sessions that take place throughout the year.

- Meet with the person in a private meeting and ensure you are both in rapport.
- Discuss and agree on the objective of the meeting, which is to create a performance development plan which will keep them looking forward and help them to achieve a particular goal or reach a more acceptable level of performance.
- Let them identify ways in which they would like to further develop their performance – training, assignments, challenges, etc.

- You should then discuss the performance for the quarter and suggest ways in which the person might further develop their performance in the future – your focus throughout the meeting should be 80% on the future and only 20% on current or recent issues.

- Add your thoughts to the person's selected areas of development and improvement. Demonstrate that you are willing to help them grow in the areas that they would like to improve in.

- Discuss areas of agreement and disagreement, and work together until you reach consensus.

- Examine job responsibilities for the coming quarter and in general using the job description or previous performance appraisals that list them. You may very well need to change or add to them since jobs naturally evolve over time.

- Agree upon standards for performance for the key job responsibilities – how will you measure success? If you can't measure success, you will be leaving your assessment of their performance up to your subjective observations, which may not be accurate.

- Set goals for the quarter. Document them, including how you will measure the achievement of each goal.

- Discuss how the goals support the accomplishment of the team or company's business plan and objectives. Let the employee understand how their role is important in the division and beyond. You could do this by asking them what would happen if they failed to perform their job at all? What is the impact on others if they don't meet their goals? Having this discussion makes it easier for you to gain commitment to the established goals and it encourages the team member to take ownership of them.

- Agree upon timelines for achieving the goals and objectives. Set milestones when you would like to check in on progress and when agreed upon steps will be completed.

- Assuming the team member's performance is satisfactory, establish a development plan with the person that helps them grow professionally. What opportunities or resources will you provide?

- If performance is not satisfactory, provide feedback. Develop a written performance improvement plan and discuss the consequences of continued poor performance. Agree upon when you will meet again in order to follow-up and check-in on their progress on the plan.

- Give the team member the opportunity to discuss and respond to your feedback, then give them the chance to add their own constructive observations. Remain open-minded here – they may give you information that will tell you how to better coach them in the future.

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- Get agreement on the next steps. You should both leave the meeting knowing exactly what the team member will be focusing on and what you will be doing to help them.

- Discuss anything else that they would like to discuss, hopefully maintaining a positive and constructive environment. Remember, you're focusing only 20% on current issues and 80% on the future.

- Mututally sign the performance development tool to indicate the discussion has taken place. Allow them to add any comments they would like to add as well.

- End the meeting in a positive and supportive manner. Confirm your confidence that they can achieve the plan and that you are available for support and assistance.

- Set a time-frame for formal follow-up. Generally quarterly, which gives adequate time to gauge progress and to ascertain if you need to make any corrections to the plan.

No matter which model you choose to use or what steps you follow, you will need to be comfortable with giving feedback to your employees. This is often the challenging part for managers, particularly if they believe the feedback is negative. They may fear confrontation, or their general management style may mean that giving feedback is uncomfortable for them.

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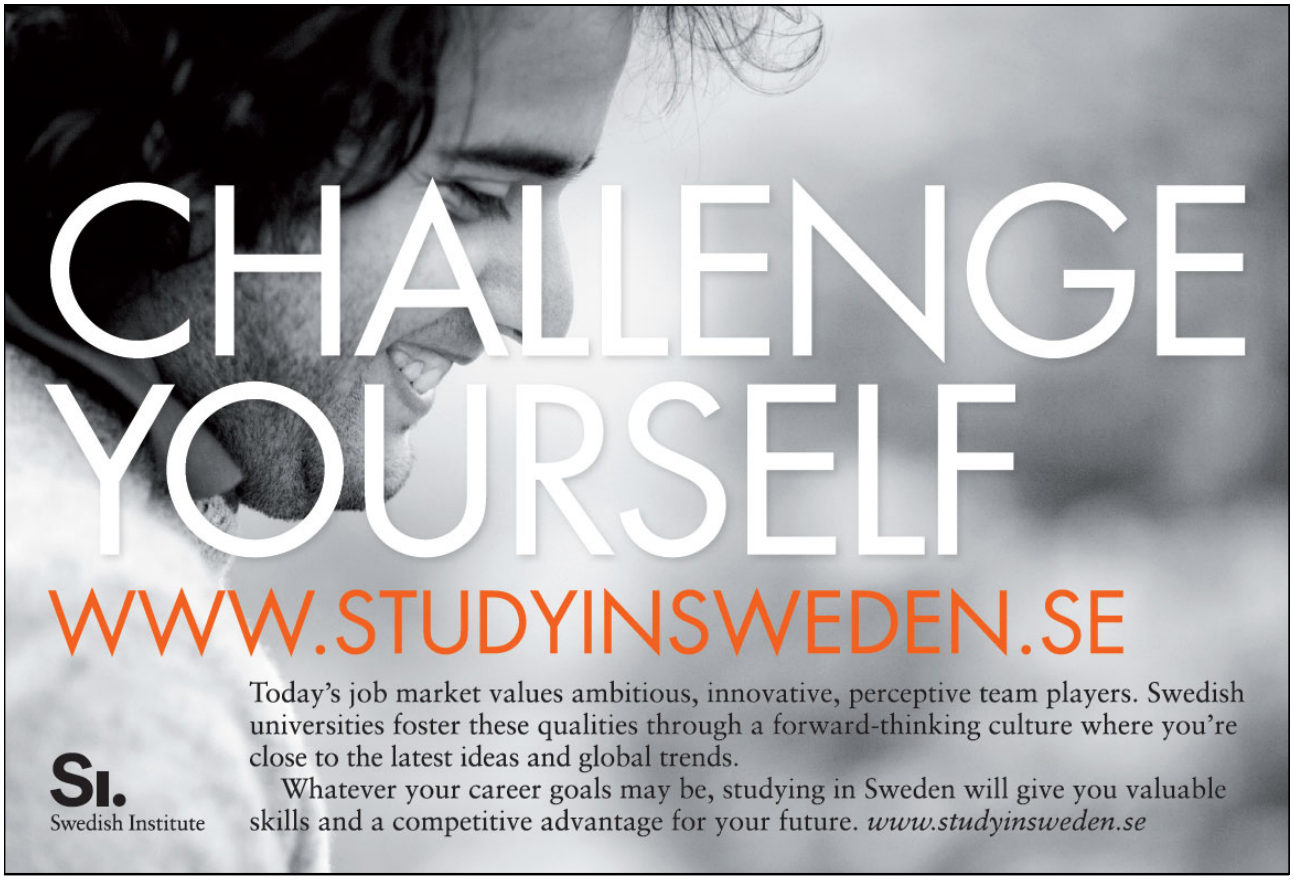

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However, there are some methods you can use when giving feedback which will help ensure that you get the result that you want. You know you have an intention of improving performance and assisting the employee to be successful when you give feedback. But you need to make sure that the team member understands that as well. Here are some tips to help you give feedback to your employees.

- Make sure that you are choosing the right time to give the feedback. Are you or the team member already stressed over something else? Are you emotionally calm enough to trust that you will be able to deliver the feedback in a constructive way? If you can't deliver feedback immediately after an incident, be sure to take down the important information so that you can refer to it later, and wait until a meeting would be most constructive.

- Make sure the feedback is descriptive, not evaluative, and that it is focused on specific behaviors, not generalizations. This helps eliminate the tendency for the team member to get defensive.

- Make the feedback actionable. In other words, make sure that there is something that the person can actually do about it.

- Make suggestions rather than commands (when possible) – when someone feels they have some control over the next step it helps them to take ownership over taking action on the feedback.

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