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Student Name: Rebekah Thomas

Student Number: 2007852

CIPD Membership Number: 57493148

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Signed: R A THOMAS

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# UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATION PERFORMANCE

By Rebekah Thomas

According to the Oxford Dictionary (2021) performance is an action, this action is then considered as to whether it has been suitable or has worked well or not. From this definition, it is clear how performance is applied universally and specifically to organisations. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) implies that in order for an organisation to thrive, it must channel and continuously improve performance. By both managing and nurturing employees with individual performance but also by providing training, incentives and the correct tools which will contribute to the organisation's performance and success.

The CIPD (2020c) adds that staff performance must be supported and developed together with achieving the company's purpose. Therefore, performance management (PM) is the activities planned and methods taken in order to accomplish this. Armstrong (2006) clarifies the purpose of PM is to create a high-performance ethos as well as affiliating individual and organisation objectives. Cookson (2017) declares PM should be a precedence for any competent organisation. Informal and formal processes are needed for PM to be effective according to the CIPD (2020c).

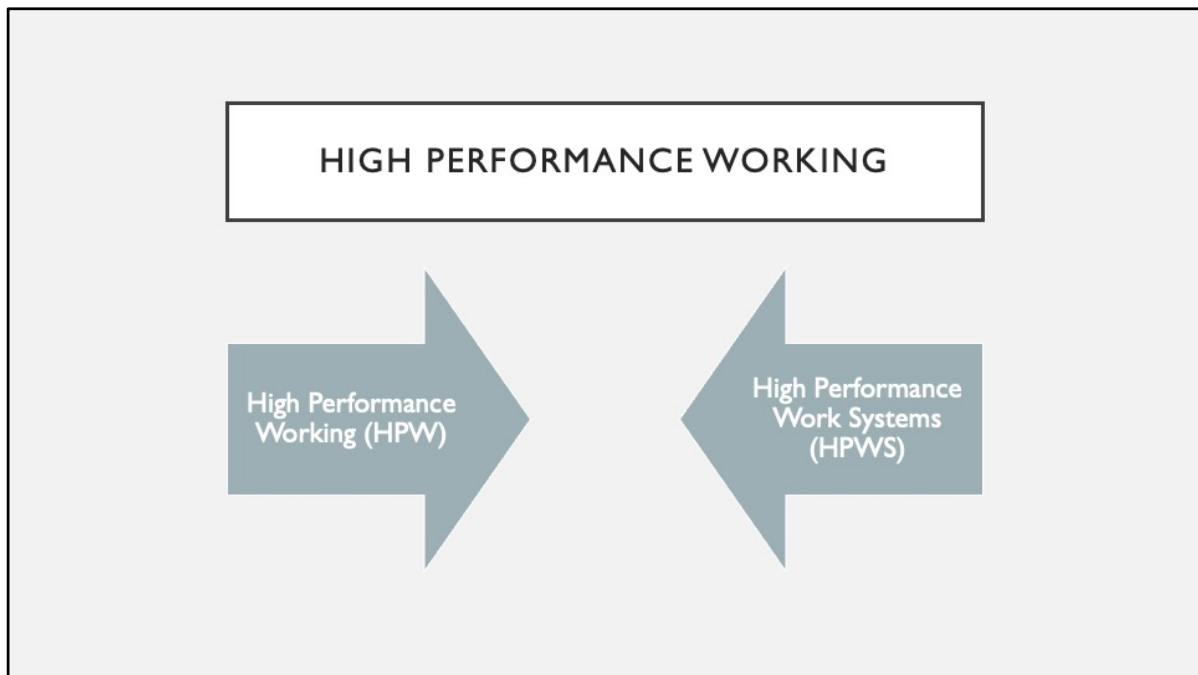
## WHAT IS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT?

According to Armstrong (2006) performance management is all about the processes put in place by an organisation in order to get the best results. This is done by affiliating individual (employee) and organisation (business) objectives.

Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) advises its about enhancing the performance levels of each employee, ensuring they are committed, passionate and dedicated to their role within the organisation.

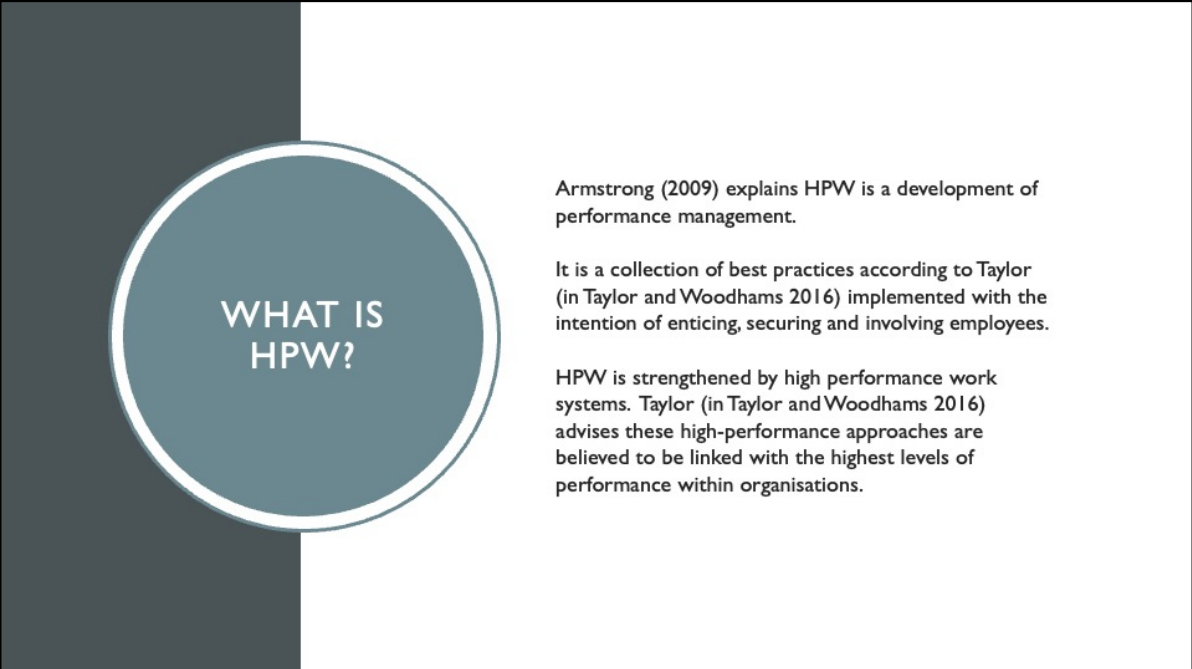
Armstrong (2006) clarifies that line management are responsible for performance management, although this may not be in true in all businesses.

The role of Human Resources (HR) and Human Resource Management (HRM) is to assist management and other relevant departments within the organisation such as Learning and Development (L&D) with improving, maximising and managing performance. It is usually an objective of the HR department, but it is not the sole responsibility of HR to deliver this as it's an organisational endeavour. The CIPD (2020c) add that many HR activities such as recruitment, development and engagement integrate PM so HR will always be involved.



Armstrong (2009) explains high-performance working (HPW) is a development of PM. Corresponding with Armstrong, Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) states that HPW is when an organisation and its people express resourcefulness, dedication, passion and commitment to not only deliver but surpass objectives. From this, it seems to be a method used by organisations designed to motivate employees in order to improve overall performance. According to Armstrong (2009) HPW is clearly a result of implementing a high-performance culture within an organisation and by both developing and following high-performance work systems (HPWS).

There are many elements of HPW and Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) advises there is no set list or precise principles to practice as they can vary across organisations but there is an agreement that they should be employee focused. Armstrong (2009) points out that these components are implemented in order to improve individual performance which will result in a positive result for both the employee and the organisation. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) shares the list which includes flexible working, job security, performance-based pay, training and development, promotion and work-life balance. These factors are classed as best practice and are intended to entice employee along with securing and involving them within the organisation. Hutchinson (2013) adds that these methods may be seen as best practice or best fit, depending on the organisation.



**WHAT IS HPW?**

Armstrong (2009) explains HPW is a development of performance management.

It is a collection of best practices according to Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) implemented with the intention of enticing, securing and involving employees.

HPW is strengthened by high performance work systems. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) advises these high-performance approaches are believed to be linked with the highest levels of performance within organisations.

It appears that HPW is the way forward and something that all organisations should look to implement. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) explains these best practice methods do to deliver peak performance and the best results for organisations. There is plenty of research available to back this up, however although the evidence is promising some are still not swayed. The research on this topic is ongoing and is continuously discussed within HR. Research from various scholars such as Pfeffer, Huselid, Coombes et al have been scrutinised. To which, Huselid (1995) declares HR add significant value to an organisational performance. Hutchinson (2013) implies HR's role with PM is crucial when it comes to implementing work practices as they are involved heavily throughout the process.

The link between HRM and performance has developed further over the years and research has advanced massively according to Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) and is still ongoing. Hutchinson (2013) advises that the CIPD confidently claim there is a positive connection between the management of employees and performance within HR.

## HPW & ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) explains there is ongoing research on the link between HPW and organisational performance.

Does HPW really lead to exceptional organisational performance?

There is clearly evidence that HPW is effective and successful but not everyone agrees..

However, the findings made by Huselid (1995) confirmed that HR adds significant value to organisational performance.

This demonstrates that although the research has been progressive and encouraging, some are still sceptical, but they may always be the case. Hutchinson (2013) proclaims best practice methods implemented by HR will boost performance for any organisation regardless of the size or sector. Funded by the CIPD, the black box studies research explored the link further and has also advocated the association. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) states the main findings from this approach include; encouraging HR bundles which triggers motivation and job satisfaction will result in employees striving to go that extra mile for the organisation, sharing ideas and goals with staff by being open and allowing employees to have a say has proven successful and finally, these HR policies or bundles alone are not enough, they must be implemented and driven by managers in order to fully thrive. Another product from this method is the AMO Model.

Hutchinson (2013) advises this model has been adapted over the years by many scholars such as Bailey (1993) and Appelbaum et al (2000) and the concept behind this model is that the role of HR is to support people within the organisation by assisting with the development of employee's skills and abilities (A) in order to do fulfil their duties, enhancing motivation (M) through targets and incentives along with allowing the opportunity (O) to flourish within the organisation. According to Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) this is a great ideal to follow which would allow an organisation to profit long term.

## THE LINK CONTINUED

The link between HRM and performance has developed further over the years and research has advanced massively according to Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) and is still ongoing.



The other approach is best fit. Hutchinson (2013) proclaims this method is the opposite to best practice. This is because as best practice tends to focus on the idea that the bundle of set HR practices will improve organisational performance irrespective, best fit emphasises on the size or location of an organisation in order to strategically plan the best approach for the business. This implies not one size fits all and the best practice approach may work well for some organisations, but not for others. According to Hutchinson (2013) there is little evidence that this approach has been successful, and it cannot be measured.

## 'BEST PRACTICE' THEORIES

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Best practice = boost organisational performance

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Black box studies

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If these methods are followed, they will result in higher performance and overall success

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Line managers must implement these practices effectively in order to succeed

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AMO Model

The final link to explore of the resource-based view (RBV) which Hutchinson (2013) explains is another approach to linking HRM with operational performance and enhancement of it. This approach focuses on what is available already within an organisation and what can be developed further rather than going externally. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) states that HRM and line managers are enthusiastic when it comes to the development of HR practices because it will improve the organisation's objectives but also satisfy employees, which is equally as important and will be covered in more detail later.

Madhani (2010) explains organisations need to explore the resources they already have in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. To which, Hutchinson (2013) implies this emphasises greatly on HR capabilities and the processes put in place. Madhani (2010) advises resources include employees, processes and products which are invaluable to a business. Therefore, HR must put the correct and suitable processes in place for employees, which links back to high-performance working easily. This enables commitment and dedication from staff required in order to achieve that sustain competitive advantage.

## 'BEST PRACTICE' THEORIES CONTINUED

The AMO Model should be utilised by HR and management in supporting people within the organisation.

ABILITY = Supporting and developing employee's skills and abilities in order to fulfil and exceed the duties with their role.

MOTIVATION = Enhancing motivation by setting targets and offering incentives or bonuses.

OPPORTUNITY = Giving staff the opportunity to flourish and thrive within their role and in the organisation.

Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016)

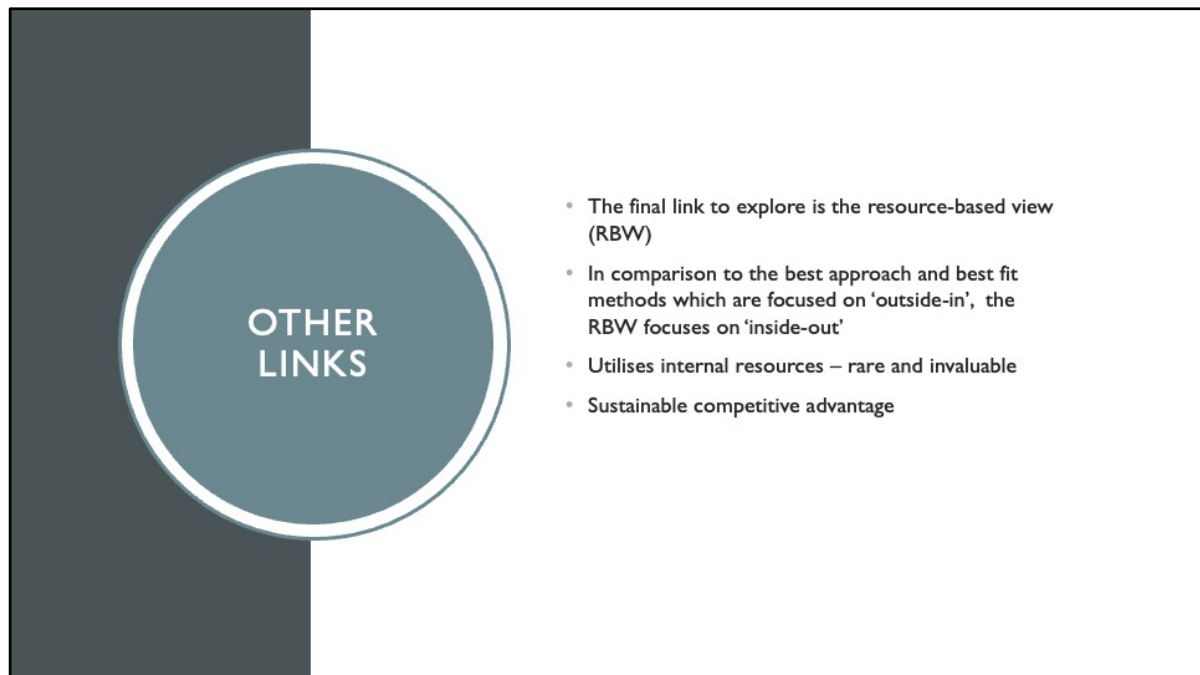
While researching HPW and HR policies put in place in order to maximise performance, it is apparent that employee well-being is something that needs to be considered. As already explained, Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) lists several best practices that organisations should offer employees and are linked to the result of high organisational performance. Many of them are designed to engage and encourage staff such as team-based approaches and involvement in decision-making within the organisation which often results in job satisfaction and commitment. Armstrong (2009) declares the commitment of staff is imperative.

CIPD (2020f) explain that employee engagement is all about communication which goes hand in hand with performance, retention and well-being. This also links back to the role of HR within organisations. According to the CIPD (2020f) employees feel valued, have a sense of purpose, understand the organisation's objectives and their contribution to this through effective employee communication. From this, it is clear if an organisation doesn't communicate well, employees are likely to feel disengaged, not appreciated and unwelcome. The CIPD (2020f) add that this can influence a person's well-being by affecting them emotionally, physically and even financially. Communication is vital now more than ever due to the Coronavirus pandemic.



Some of the best practice principles include performance-related pay, promotion and a home-life balance and can be associated with employee well-being. Communication between an organisation and all employees is crucial according to the CIPD (2020f) within HPW and in general. However, focusing predominantly on HPW Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) states it is important for employees to have a standard home-life balance to avoid the risk of burning out. It could be argued if an employee is working extra hard in order to hit targets and get the job done, they are at risk of becoming stressed and could end up on sick leave which would be arduous for the employee and could be detrimental to the organisation.

Boxall and Macky (2014) imply that work intensification is a result of HPWS. They found the following as some of the effects; work pressures, fatigue, work overload and working longer hours. This is interesting because the best practice bundles within HPW have only been seen as a positive and are considered unquestionable for many.



They may be encouraging and key to an organisation's overall performance and success, but they need to be implemented correctly with employees in mind. Personnel Today (2018) advise employee well-being and health should be discussed more often because it affects absence and sickness levels which will then impact performance and productivity. It is important to clarify that as HR and management are responsible for implementing and driving HPW, it makes sense for employee well-being to be another key responsibility.

Swift (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) discusses the crucial role of managing people within organisations which falls under the jurisdiction of both line managers and the HR department. Loyalty, commitment and job satisfaction are all more likely to increase if an employee has a good working relationship with their line manager. These factors relate directly back to HPW.

## RECAP

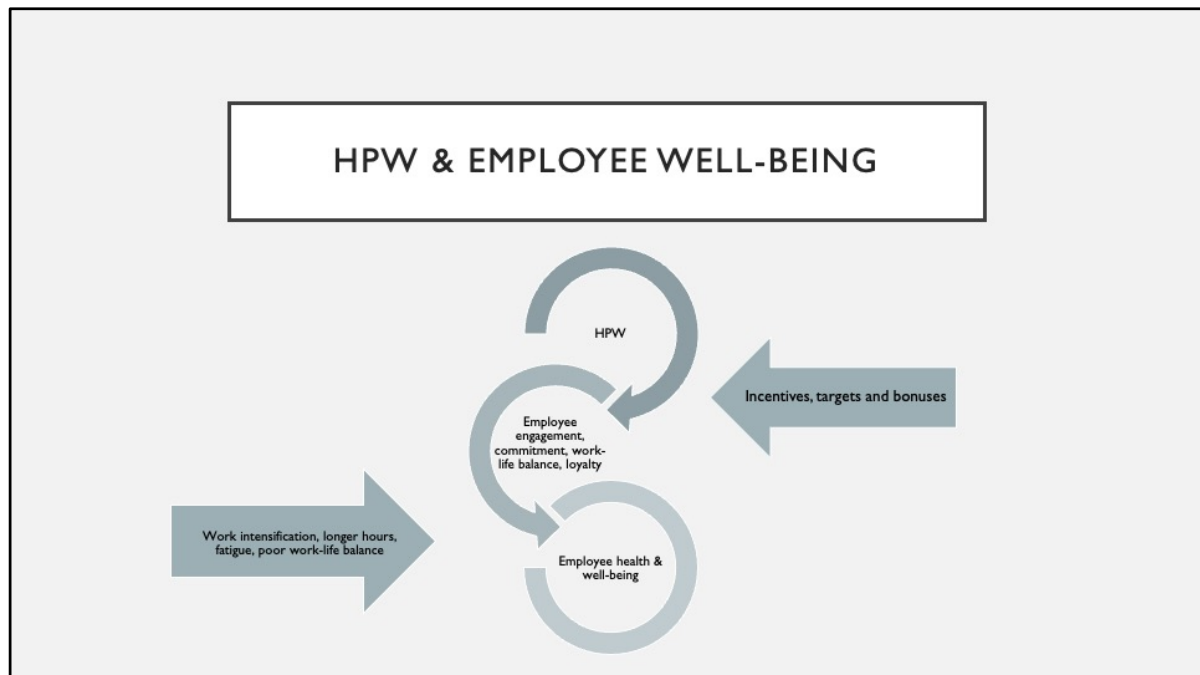
To summarise, performance and performance management have been evaluated along with HPW and HPWS.

The organisational performance link between HR and HPW has been established through various approaches such as best practice, best fit and the RBV.



The CIPD (2020c) have clarified that PM is a continuous occurrence within organisations and is a vital tool required when it comes to setting objectives. It is way of making sure employees contribute to the organisation's goals and objectives. PM requires a blend of both formal and informal methods in order to be fully effective. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) states formal methods are more commonly known as appraisals, development reviews and performance evaluations. There are various versions and adaptations of the PM cycle, and it will all differ depending on the organisation and nature of the business. Armstrong (2009) explains the PM cycle consists of plan, act, monitor and review. These stages are never-ending and regularly overlap. It could be seen as a straightforward strategy.

An employee will plan their individual objectives with their line manager and what they will do in order to achieve them. The employee will undertake this task as part of their daily role while being monitored along the way with regular feedback and communication. There will then be a final review to discuss performance relating to achieving their individual objectives, any issues they had and what they can do the develop in future. The CIPD (2020c) add that objectives are usually targets and give employees something to aim for but recently outputs are not the only measurement that's evaluated. L&D objectives, behaviours and assessing an employee against an organisation's values and standards are now more commonly used along with the creation of personal development plans (PDP).



An organisation must make clear objectives as a starting point and from here, to set and monitor performance. Armstrong (2006) advises should not be a tick box exercise, it is important and must be integrated appropriately into a business to be successful. Although the PM cycle has been explained and perceived as quite simple, there is a lot on ongoing debate on whether PM systems are out of date and if they are even needed anymore. Cookson (2017) agrees declaring many organisations see appraisals as an inconvenience and Dudman (2016) finds evidence of businesses wanting to end them completely.

Neil (2018) states that for an organisation to prosper, good PM is essential. So, although there are many discussions regarding PM and whether it is needed or not, perhaps the question is how can we improve it or make it better. Cookson (2017) explains the purpose of PM is to ensure employees are working to the best of their abilities and contributing to the organisation. To which Neil (2018) adds that if performance is not managed properly, employees do not measure up to their full potential, which can be a big problem for organisations.

## EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING CONTINUED

- CIPD (2020f) explain that employee engagement is all about communication which goes hand in hand with performance, retention and well-being.
- Communication is vital now more than ever due the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Boxall and Macky (2014) imply that work intensification is a result of HPWS.
- According to the CIPD (2020f) employees feel valued, have a sense of purpose, understand the organisation's objectives and their contribution to this through effective employee communication.
- Personnel Today (2018) suggest health and well-being can affect absence and sickness of staff within an organisation which will then have a direct impact on performance and productivity.
- Communication is key!

There are various PM actions to be taken alongside the cycle according to Armstrong (2006) such as defining an employee's role and a performance agreement which allows an employee to understand what is expected of them, what the objectives will be and how best to achieve them. Employees may be offered a PDP which Hutchinson (2013) states is a way of identifying development and training needs. Finally, there is an appraisal or performance review which is usually annually to discuss performance over the last year and from this, new targets are set and sometimes ratings are given.

There are also various theories that support PM such as the control theory which Armstrong (2009) suggests focuses on the significance of feedback and how effective it is particularly within PM. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) discusses an innovative form of appraisals which is called 360-degree feedback is all about receiving feedback from management but also peers and stakeholders.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & HOW IT WORKS

- The definition of performance and performance have been explained.
  - HPW is a result of performance.
- The link between this and employee well-being has also been made.

So how does performance management actually work?

It is evident how PM contributes employee capability and commitment in various ways, such as through the best practice bundles and HPWS in which Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) advises are designed to maximise commitment to the organisation. It is clear if an employee feels appreciated, valued and is engaged by their employer then they are highly likely to stay loyal. According to the CIPD (2021a) if there are financial incentives or bonuses involved with hitting objectives or targets, then this will also have a positive impact. Employee capabilities are developed through appraisals, reviews and PDP which are all focused on competencies and how to improve them. If learning needs are identified, these will be addressed and resolved.

The CIPD (2020e) explain the importance of recognising an employee's skills but also their potential and this can be acknowledged within PM. Similarly, to recognising and rewarding talent PM has an influence. Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) states that salary alone is not enough but by rewarding salary based on performance not only recognises talent but can retain it. Hutchinson (2013) discusses performance-based rewards. If an employee knows they will be rewarded for going that extra mile, then they will go the distance every time because they know their capabilities will be acknowledged and rewarded. Again, this links directly to HPW and PM.

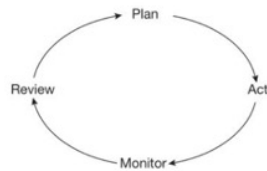


Figure 2.1 The management cycle

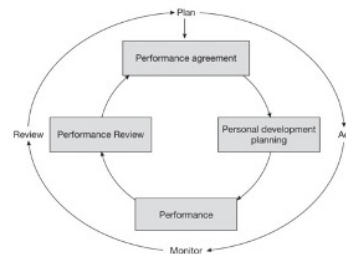


Figure 2.2 The performance management cycle

## THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CYCLE

According to Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) line managers are responsible for the PM of their staff, which makes sense as they are the ones who deal with employees directly and regularly. The CIPD (2020c) advise management are key to the delivery and support in achieving objectives. They also connect individual employee objectives with the organisation's goal. Armstrong (2006) states it is imperative that line managers take ownership of PM. Within PM, L&D requirements may be identified which often results in coaching & mentoring another role of line management. As line managers work daily with their teams and know them well, they can deliver frequent feedback where necessary and implement appropriate objectives which have been agreed with HR.

Armstrong (2006) adds that line managers are not the only ones responsible for PM within an organisation, the HR department, leading management and of course employees also have accountability too. "Line managers have a very important role to play, not only in managing people and operations day-to-day, but also in implementing HR and other organisational policies and in supporting their team's development" (CIPD, 2020, <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/hr/line-managers-factsheet>).

## THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CYCLE CONTINUED

- Appraisals
- Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Performance review
- End of year appraisal
- Feedback
- 360-degree feedback
- Development review
- Performance evaluation

The role of HR with PM specifically working with line managers has been explored briefly. HR and line managers must work together in unison. Swift (in Taylor and Woodhams (2016) states that the responsibilities of a line manager have significantly grown over the years and some of these duties were formerly handled by HR, such as people management.

Some argue that as line managers work more closely with the workforce and technically manage them directly, so it is only right that people management is their responsibility. However, it is then HR's duty to ensure line managers receive the correct training in order to manage their teams appropriately. This demonstrates that HR must educate line managers where appropriate. Cookson (2017) discusses the importance of PM and appraisals so line managers must be able to deliver appraisals efficiently for them to be successful and beneficial.

## PROBLEMS WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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Out of date

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Time consuming

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A tick box exercise

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Completed by a manager who doesn't manage the employee directly

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Not relevant

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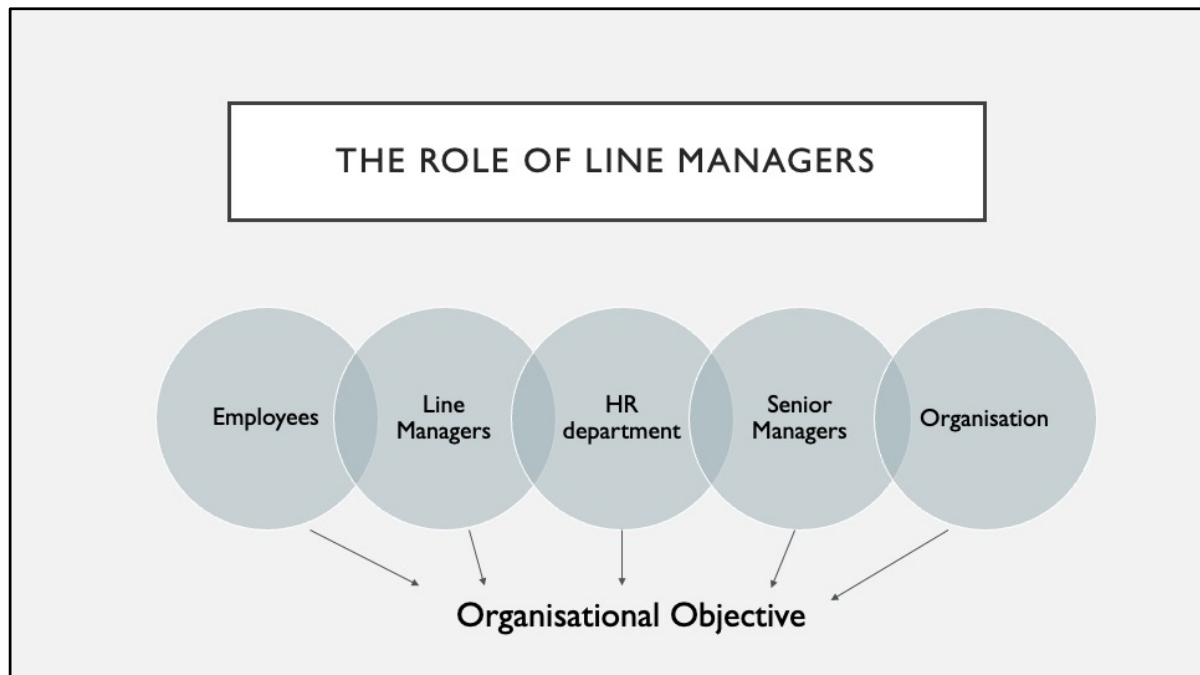
A lot of paperwork

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Only done once a year if that

Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) suggests HR must be able to provide advice and support when needed and this could be for issues with performance or for problems with current practices. Armstrong (2006) adds that HR can manage training needs for employees regarding any feedback or performance reviews as well as coaching line managers. Communication is also a pivotal role of HR. The CIPD (2020f) points out we are all responsible for communication but exclusively HR and line managers as they must work together and set the tone.

Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) explains PM is usually an organisational effort and HR oversees the activities, co-ordinating and stepping in to support where necessary. They have a crucial part to play within an organisation and Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) advises they are invaluable when it comes to PM.



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## LINE MANAGERS CONTINUED..

- HR and line managers must work together in unity.
- Swift (in Taylor and Woodhams (2016) advises line managers work closely with employees and technically manage them directly, so it makes sense that management is their responsibility.
- Line managers are key to the delivery and support in achieving objectives CIPD (2020c).
- “Line managers have a very important role to play, not only in managing people and operations day-to-day, but also in implementing HR and other organisational policies and in supporting their team’s development” (CIPD, 2020, <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/hr/line-managers-factsheet>).

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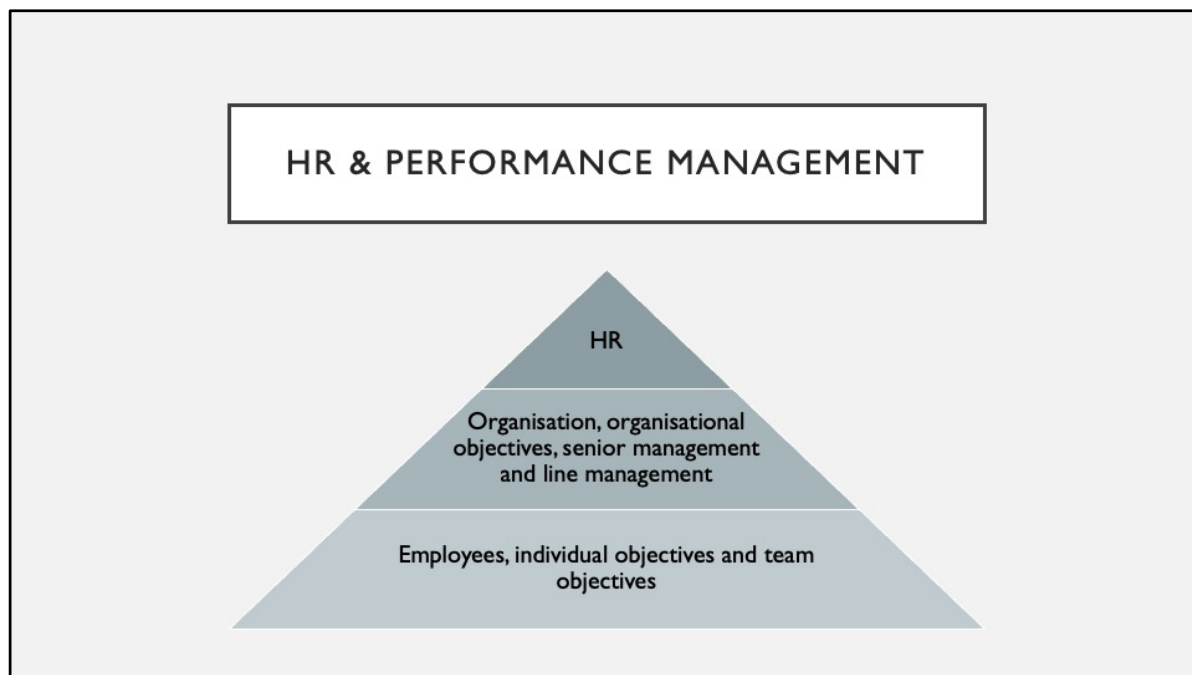
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## HR CONTINUED

- Taylor (in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) explains performance management is an organisational effort and HR oversees the activities, co-ordinating and stepping in to support where necessary.
- HR must be able to provide advice and support when needed and this could be for issues with performance such as low performance or for problems with current practices as they be flawed.
- HR can work with line management with the delivery of objectives, actioning any training or development needs and co-ordinating the process of performance management.

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## ANY QUESTIONS?

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