

November 2024

BRIEFING PAPER

AC 1.1

Evidence-Based Practice

Evidence-based people practice is a professionally detailed appraisal approach to decision-making that combines the best available evidence from multiple sources. This approach is put into place to enhance the quality and effectiveness of decisions. Denise Rousseau highlights that where decisions made are based on evidence, it reduces errors, in contrast to those made by subjectively held opinions (P.114, Taylor and Woodhams, 2022).

The ability for people professionals to make sound evidence-based decisions is paramount within the people profession. Within organisational decision-making, evidence-based practices are crucial approaches to navigating information with effective thinking. Therefore, there are widely considered four sources of evidence for evidence-based decisions for people professionals (CIPD, 2023a).

The four sources of evidence for practitioners are:

Stakeholder evidence, which comes in the form of feedback on decisions that will directly affect them. Internal stakeholders influence job security for staff, while external stakeholders, like medication suppliers for the NHS, can impact decisions by increasing costs.

Organisational data in people practice can be categorised as hard numbers (e.g., staff turnover) or soft elements (e.g., management style).

Scientific literature evidence for people professionals comes in the form of the abundance of research available on matters relating back to the workplace. Materials including HR articles and studies, which could be a wealth of information for potential solutions to the workplace issues.

Professional expertise as a source of evidence comes through the experiences and judgements of people professionals. The positives of this source are the valuable insights that can be provided and ideas of solutions that could work. The negatives being that through judgements alone, there could be space for bias.

People professionals should consider all available evidence from multiple sources, as relying on just one source is insufficient. When you can draw insight from multiple sources, the more effective the evidence (CIPD, 2023a).

The CIPD created six steps of evidence-based practice (CIPD, 2024a). These six steps provide a structured approach for people professionals to make sound decisions by integrating the best evidence from the sources described above. The six steps are;

Asking, crucial to setting the stage for focused evidence searches, and therefore setting up the relevance of the remaining 5 steps.

Acquiring, the evidence gathering step, critical for people professionals to have a broad range of evidence to make their decision.

Appraising, the step where evidence is critically evaluated for reliability, therefore eliminating biases and focusing solely on credibility.

Aggregating, people professionals will be able to identify the gaps in available information at this step once synthesising and weighing the evidence.

Applying, people professionals in this step ensure that decisions are both evidence-based and feasible within the organisational environment they will be implemented.

Assessing, this step concentrates on the outcomes of decisions made, if feedback on the outcomes are poor, it can be used to refine future decision-making processes.

AC 1.2

Analysis Tools

Organisations must use analysis tools to diagnose issues, challenges and see opportunities. Analysis tools are used in people practice for organisational analysis, and aid decision-making.

Tool Examples

Each analysis tool serves specific purposes to understand external and internal environments, diagnose cultural issues, and assess strategic alignment.

Strategic review helps identify growth opportunities. (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). Porter's Five Forces helps organisations mitigate external factors; and Balanced scorecard, which has four sets of performance measurements – financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth (CIPD, 2018a).

A PESTLE analysis tool is an acronym for **P**olitical, **E**conomic, **S**ociological, **T**echnological, **L**egal, and **E**nvironmental factors facing organisations. Professionals use PESTLE to identify common themes, helping organisations prepare better and gain a competitive advantage. (CIPD, 2024b).

PESTLE issues and opportunities examples include:

Economically – NHS Wales relies on budget forecasting and allocations from the Welsh Government. HR must focus on how budget impacts the workforce, as seen at Hywel Dda University Health Board, requiring increased scrutiny in response to targeted interventions (Davies, 2024).

Technological – People practitioners should use AI to enhance organisational efficiency while avoiding negative impacts on the workforce, such as redundancies.

Advantages

PESTLE is advantageous for practitioners in evidence-based decisions, thanks to its simple framework in its application (CIPD, 2024b). Understanding factors helps organisations anticipate threats and opportunities, enabling people professionals to adapt proactively and make more informed decisions.

Disadvantages

There is a risk of oversimplification with PESTLE, leading to decisions based on insufficient information. Analysis may depend on outdated assumptions, it is essential to review timeframes of the last analysis, before making changes. The CIPD note that when PESTLE analyses are not repeated regularly, there will be a reduction in effectiveness (CIPD, 2024b).

Analysis Methods

Analysis methods in people practice include observations, where people professionals integrate into the team to better understand working practices involved (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022); Surveys gather information from staff, guided by detailed specific questions (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022).

Analysis methods collect qualitative and quantitative data, aiding in diagnosing needs and identifying opportunities.

Interview method.

A valuable method for organisations seeking to recognise and diagnose issues, challenges, and opportunities. Interviews are a qualitative approach, about active listening and which allows for in-depth exploration of specific areas within organisations. Interviews are useful when there is the need to investigate a small number of issues in significant detail returning detailed insights (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022). Interviews provide a contextual understanding of job satisfaction, by engaging direct the ability to uncover factors affecting morale and satisfaction are possible.

Advantages

Interviews highlight the human aspect of an organisation, fostering a positive culture and perception through honest dialogue.

Interviews in people practice help diagnose underlying issues and identify improvement opportunities by uncovering bottlenecks and inefficiencies within organisations through direct contact.

Interviews help identify growth areas and assess employee readiness for change, enabling organisations to plan and communicate more effectively regarding upcoming changes.

They can also uncover employee perspectives on current challenges through employee engagement. For example, workplace culture and the areas that need addressing.

People practice interviews gather new innovative ideas direct from employees. Organisations that conduct interviews can better understand staff expectations, individual goals, and identify training programs for development.

Disadvantages

Interviewing can be time-consuming, both in the conduction and analysing the data. Organisations need to allocate adequate resources for effective interviewing, weighing time commitments against the benefits of obtaining rich qualitative data (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022). Interviewers must be neutral as to not lead 'wanted' responses.

Suggestion

It is advisable to use analysis tools alongside others or methods to increase effectiveness. For example, run a SWOT analysis (S-strengths, W-weaknesses, O-opportunities, T-threats) alongside PESTLE when strategic planning (CIPD, 2024c). Combining insights from people professionals provides a balanced understanding of challenges and

opportunities, allowing for realistic solutions, such as addressing labour changes within the organisation. (CIPD, 2024b).

AC 1.3

Critical Thinking

The six steps process of asking, acquiring, appraising, aggregating, applying and assessing fosters critical thinking. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) define critical thinking as analysing and evaluating ideas, theories, and concepts to assess their validity, evidence support, and potential bias. It involves reflecting on and interpreting data, drawing warranted conclusions and recognising ill-defined assumptions.

Principles and application

In critical thinking when evaluating other people's ideas, it's important to remain objective. Avoid emotional bias by ensuring ideas are expressed clearly and the correct questions are asked.

Rational critical thinking involves focusing on logic and evidence, and not on personal feelings.

Professionals should be critical in their thinking and always investigate sources. Validation of information with reliable data and sources to ensure well-researched arguments is crucial.

The credibility of sources needs to be examined through critical thinking, to assess the quality of data, and verifying all information before accepting its truthfulness. Platforms, like LinkedIn, allow individuals to present as experts, regardless of their actual expertise, and this the information must be critically analysed.

Critical thinking involves being aware of and addressing bias. Unconscious bias influences decisions positively or negatively. For instance, not promoting a team member due to an unfounded negative perception, like rudeness, or promoting based on an assumed positive trait, like maturity, without knowing their true character. (CIPD, 2018b).

Conscious bias includes confirmation bias, gender bias, and similarity bias. For example, during interviews, a panel seek evidence to support their initial feelings about a candidate, such as their school, which aligns with the panel's favourable views (Katie Howard, 2023).

People professionals foster fairness in critical thinking, by ensuring they compare 'like with like' during evaluation of their own and others' ideas. Recognising various methodologies, like integrative synthesis, is crucial. This approach compares evidence from multiple data sets (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023), leading to more accurate assessments of ideas.

Context influences outcomes. People professionals should take the time to break down information, to a point that they understand contexts to a comprehensive level.

Critical thinking requires clarity when analysing information. Well-reasoned arguments that are articulated clearly, leave no room for ambiguity, and void of misunderstandings. Through this, people professionals understand perspectives of others and build on foundations for discussion.

By differentiating fact from opinion, professionals can engage in complex debates based on evidence instead of personal beliefs. This skill is particularly useful in VUCA environments where the information can be volatile.

Fake news is prevalent in the evolution of social media. The ability of practitioners to use critical thinking to identify personal agendas and misinformation is essential, as highlighted by 'fake news' claims during the recent UK and US elections.

Critical thinkers should evaluate information, be sceptical of claims, verify facts through multiple sources, and differentiate between experts and populist opinion (CIPD, 2017).

People professionals can use triangulation, which involves using multiple sources of data i.e. surveys and case studies to reach a reliable conclusion (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). When different methods yield the same conclusions, it confirms their validity and boosts confidence in evidence-based decisions. Conversely, differing conclusions inform practitioners on how to adjust their approaches.

AC 1.4

Decision Making

Decision making is a systematic approach used to make choices between alternatives, solve problems, and evaluate situations. Herbert A. Simon developed a theory, widely known as the Simon theory, which outlines a decision, as a choice we make among a logical sequence of steps; Situation analysis, developing courses of actions, exercising choice and assessing the outcomes. (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023).

The De Bono Six Thinking Hat Process

De Bono's Six Thinking Hats encourages people to explore multiple perspectives of a decision. The De Bono technique improves decision-making by examining a problem from six perspectives, each represented by a different coloured hat (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022).

The coloured hats encourage to explore the different perspectives allowing for a balanced evaluation process. The Six Thinking Hats Method includes: -

White Hat: Focuses on information and data; concentrating on facts and figures.

Red Hat: Emphasises emotions and intuition; considers gut feelings about reactions.

Black Hat: Highlights potential downsides; crucial for critical thinking and caution.

Yellow Hat: Promotes positive thinking and optimism; identifying the benefits in gloomy situations.

Green Hat: Fosters creativity; essential for brainstorming and developing solutions.

Blue Hat: Guides the decision-making process; by deciding which hat to wear at each stage.

This method achieves effective outcomes by gaining a comprehensive understanding of issues faced and the best ways forward. De Bono's method works as a lone thinking enterprise or as part of a group collaboration, which allows all voices to be heard. This method ensures that all parts of decisions are investigated, and the decision-making process is thorough.

Action Learning Process

Action learning is where a group of people come together to solve problems and help individuals come to decisions. When done best, action learning contains people with varied experiences and expertise to work on

problems collaboratively. This decision-making process is enhanced due to different viewpoints, challenged assumptions, and open dialogue.

Action learning asks for the assured accountability of decisions made, resulting in individuals committed to the process and the implementation of solutions discussed.

Participants are required to reflect on their outcomes - what has worked well and what needs adjusting. With reflection, more informed choices are made in the future, leading to more effective outcomes. In summary, action learning is a powerful decision-making process through collaboration, reflection, and accountability.

AC 1.5

Ethical Perspectives

Ethical perspectives provide valuable frameworks for individuals and organisations to navigate complex moral dilemmas and make decisions that align with their values and principles regarding right and wrong.

Armstrong (2023) notes that HR professionals have a special responsibility for guarding and promoting core values in the organisation on how people should be managed and treated. Core values within ethics pertain to shaping honesty, fairness, equality, and acting as role models.

People professionals who have different ethical perspectives leads to differing approaches to moral dilemmas such as tackling conflicts of interest for organisations. **Deontology and Utilitarianism** are two prominent ethical perspectives for people practitioners which significantly inform and influence moral decision-making. Each looks at the impacts of decision-making uniquely differently, with distinct approaches to evaluating what is right or wrong.

Deontology is an ethical perspective which emphasises and centres on rules, duties, and intentions. Deontology tells us that actions are morally correct if they are aligned to moral duties and norms.

Deontology has core ethical values where it is more interested with what people do, rather than the consequences of the actions (BBC, 2014). It prioritises honesty, justice, and follows Immanuel Kant's principle of what is right for one person, is right for everybody (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023).

Deontological ethics in practice involves a finance director who prioritises paying suppliers on time, viewing it as a moral obligation. This approach focuses on the rightness of timely payments for suppliers, rather than considering potential consequences for the organisation.

Deontology does have challenges, particularly when rules and duties conflict, and so what decision to make for what requires precedence.

Utilitarianism

Defined by Michael Sandel as the idea that the morality of an action is based solely on its consequences, with the right action being one that results in the best overall outcome. (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). Therefore, where deontology concentrates on actions, utilitarianism assesses the morality of actions, significantly on the outcomes, aiming for happiness for the largest amount of people possible.

Utilitarianism emphasises honesty, integrity, fairness, and keeping promises, suggesting that aligning with these values leads to better outcomes. These core values are rated highly by utilitarians and use them to guide their everyday actions (MacAskill, Meissner, and Chappell, 2023).

Utilitarianism encourages decision-makers to evaluate potential consequences and choose actions that meets overall happiness or welfare. As such, whistleblowing, which is the action of reporting suspected wrongdoing at work (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023), is an example of assessing utilitarianism at work. Utilitarianists will see the wrongdoing, and know it's wrong, but only affects a small number of people, they will not report it. If a wrongdoing, like a leak from your nuclear power plant, clearly impacts the majority, it meets the utilitarian threshold for reporting.

Utilitarianism faces criticism for justifying actions that harm minorities, such as underfunding BAME communities' access to out-of-hours GP services in favour of benefiting a larger population, which receives service expansions.

AC 3.1

Organisational performance is measured through financial and non-financial terms. As such organisations can use various methods to measure both sides of the performance. Measuring the financial and non-financial performance is critical when assessing the health of an organisation, to guide future strategies, decision and prove value to stakeholders (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023).

Financial performance metrics assess the economic success of the organisation, whilst non-financial concentrates on areas within the organisation such as customer satisfaction.

Financial Performance

Evaluation measurements on the financial health of your organisation. In measuring the financial performance, concentration is placed on profits, investment returns, and money in the bank.

Common financial measurements in organisations include shareholder value, profit, financial performance, sales turnover, revenue, gross and net profit, return on investment (ROI) and productivity (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023).

Armstrong (2023) explains that ROI measures the values of investments, it's the allocation of money with the expectation of seeing some benefit or profit. If you invest £2000 into an organisation (allocation of money), and get a return of £20,000, the ratio of profit would be 90%.

An example in practice, is a leaflet distribution company, deciding to branch out to digital marketing. The company buys a digital screen for £500, and after 12 months the screen generates £24000 in advertisement sales. People professionals need to evaluate the investment details to see if the revenue generated justifies the campaign costs, including operational expenses and staff training.

Return on investment data is extremely useful information and value for stakeholders, which informs their decision-making for future investments. If ROI is profitable, it suggests positive future prospects, particularly if organisations can demonstrate effective resource use to achieve results.

Non-Financial Performance

Common measures include customer satisfaction, retention rates, innovation, and market share.

Customer satisfaction can assess reactions to a new product, such as a leaflet distribution company's investment in digital screens. After a month of a trial, the marketing team distributes surveys to analyse the impact on the organisation's reputation in the digital sector. If expectations are being exceeded, it could be a catalyst to greater investment.

AC 3.2

People Practice and Added Value

People practices create a happier workforce through excellent administrative services and enhances employee engagement as a return. Value returns include increased collaboration, creativity and staff innovation. People practices can also add value to organisations by delivering business objectives.

Satisfaction Surveys

Used to engage employees to voice their opinions on matters affecting their work (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). Conducting regular employee surveys measures the level of employee satisfaction and therefore impact of people practices. These surveys are used to gather qualitative data on various aspects of their experiences at work, including, environment, engagement, management support, and overall job satisfaction.

Surveys in application reveal how well employees perceive people practices, for example, the availability of wellbeing services in an organisation. The more practitioners understand their employees the better the outcomes.

Staff surveys offer insights and enable employees to thrive and enhance service quality. In Wales, we have an annual NHS Wales survey (NHS Wales, 2024), using the tagline #YourVoiceMatters. If employees of organisations want change, surveys give space to voice their opinions, anonymously.

Surveys are more effective when performed regularly, to monitor the long-term effects of employee practices. Annual surveys are said to be too sparse, with information outdated to address necessary impactful changes (Cholteeva, 2022).

Retention Rates

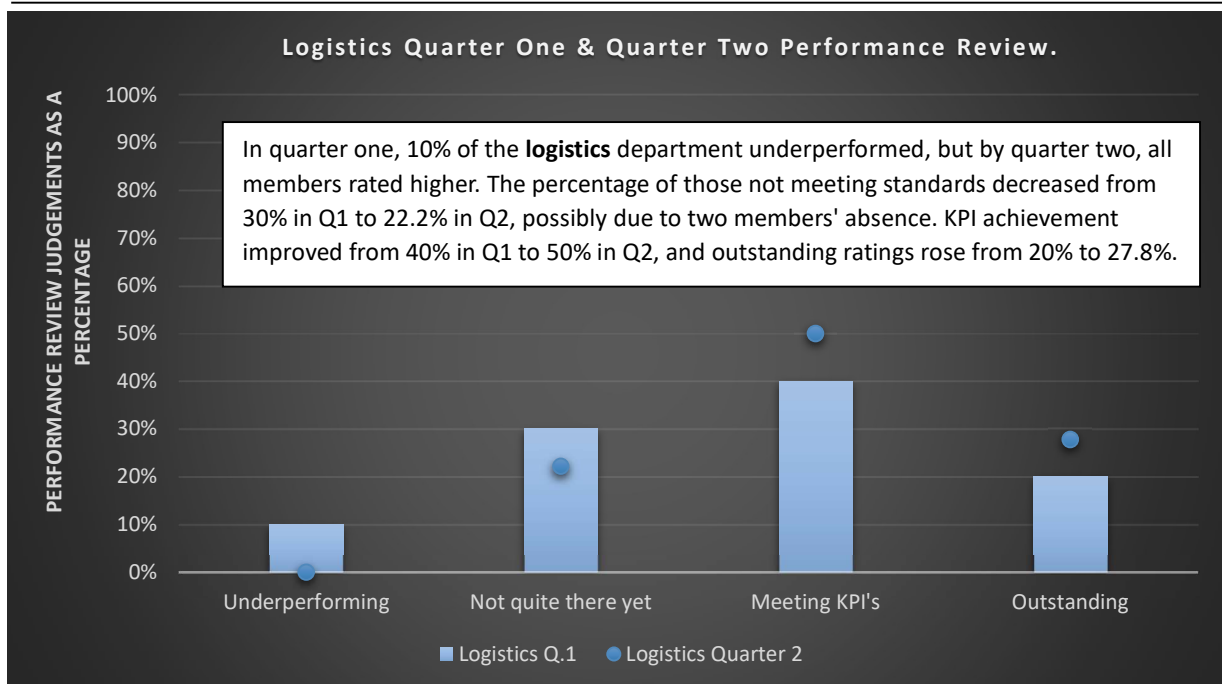
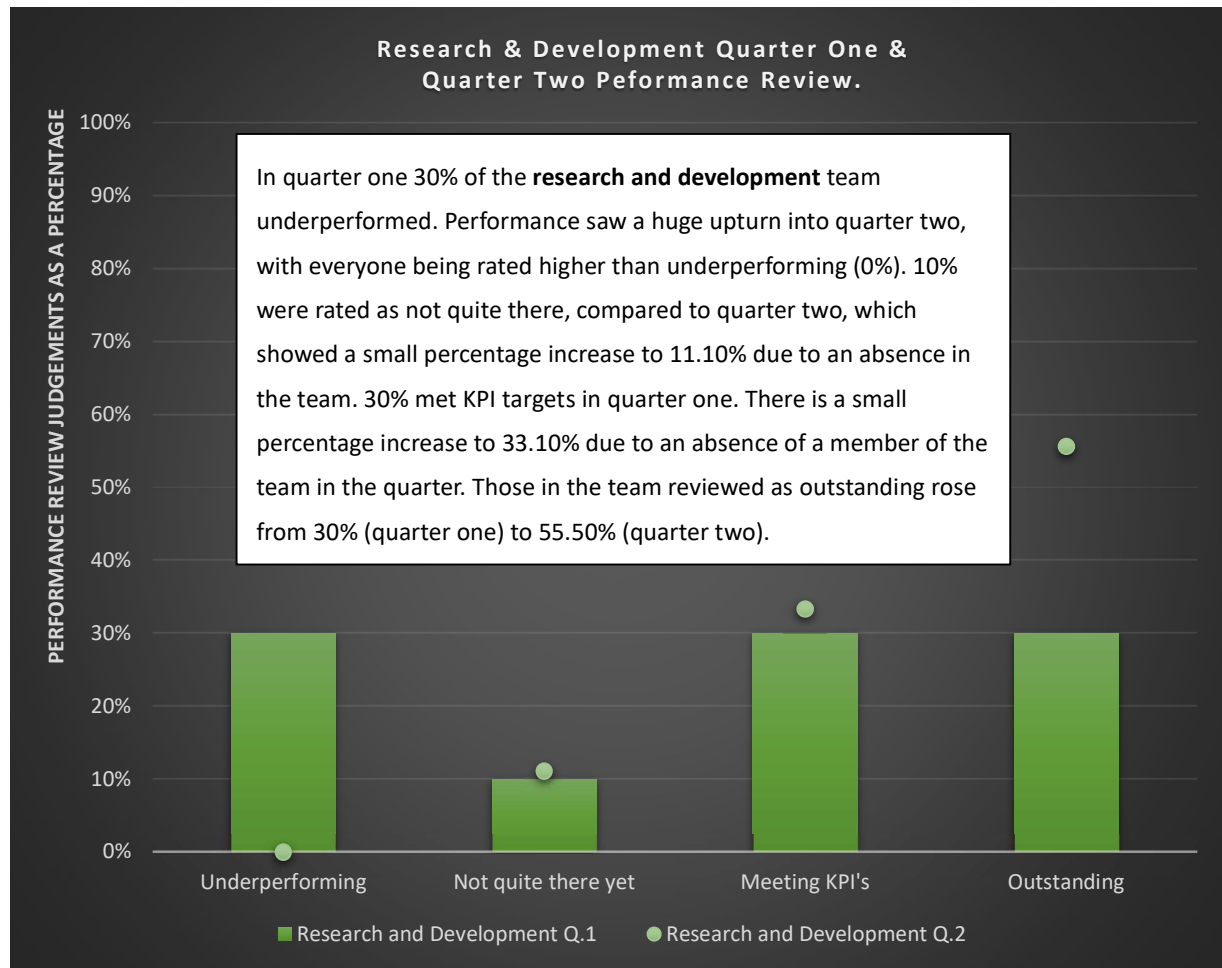
The CIPD (2024d) note that it's important to measure why people leave, understanding the pull (the attraction of that new job), and push (the dissatisfaction in their current role) factors.

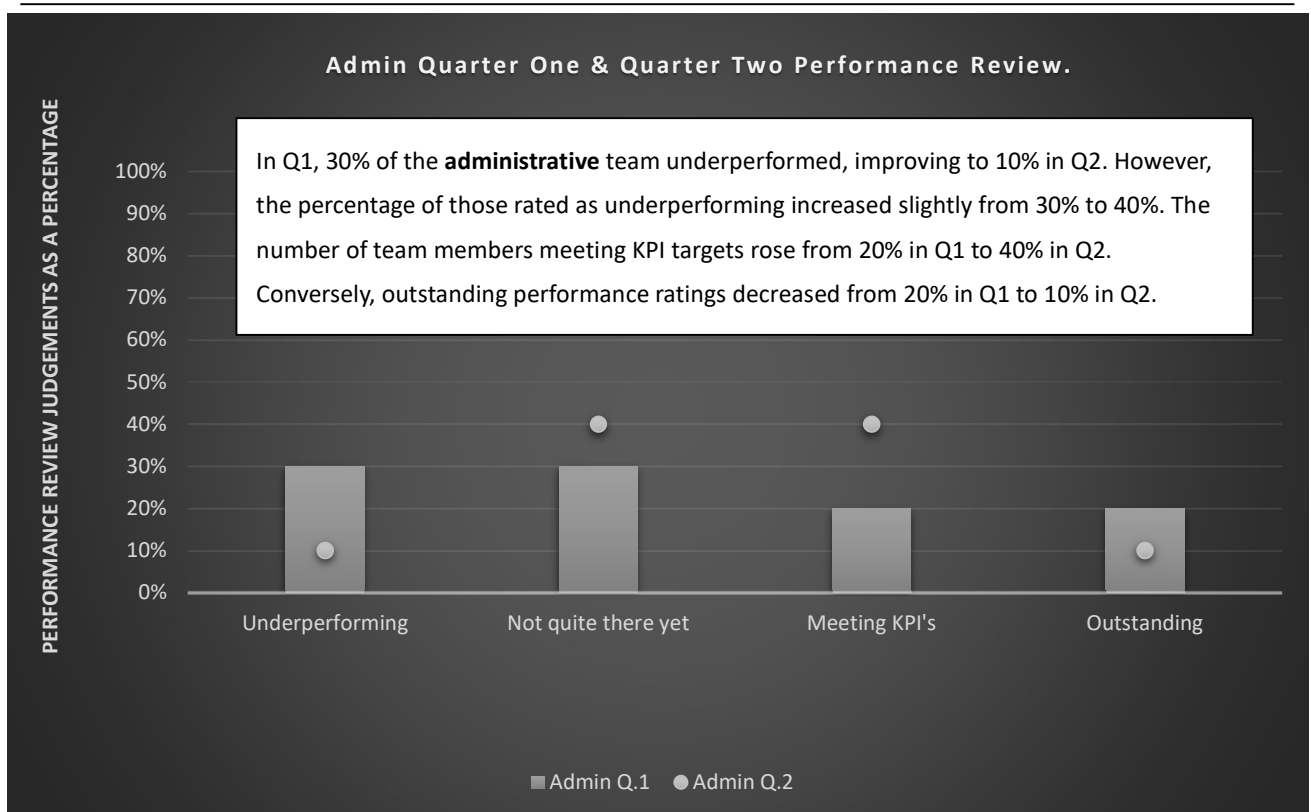
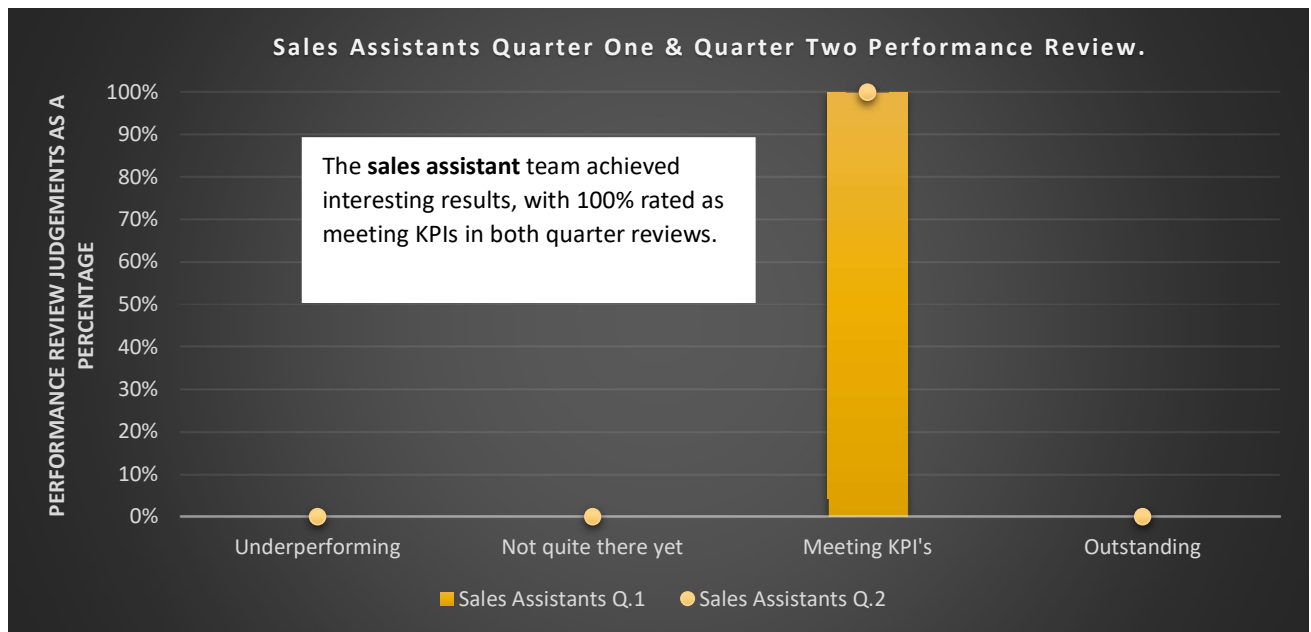
Employee retention should be important to HR, as when retention is high organisations reduce agency costs, overall company costs, increase productivity, and addresses any recruitment issues.

Where people practices are not being effective, staff will show low morale, become disruptive, and become a wider impact onto the goals and vision of the organisation.

HR departments with excellent administrative abilities will notice poor retention rates and analyse and tweak new employee acquisition procedures. From better onboarding to rewarding results, people professionals can input all to retain top talent.

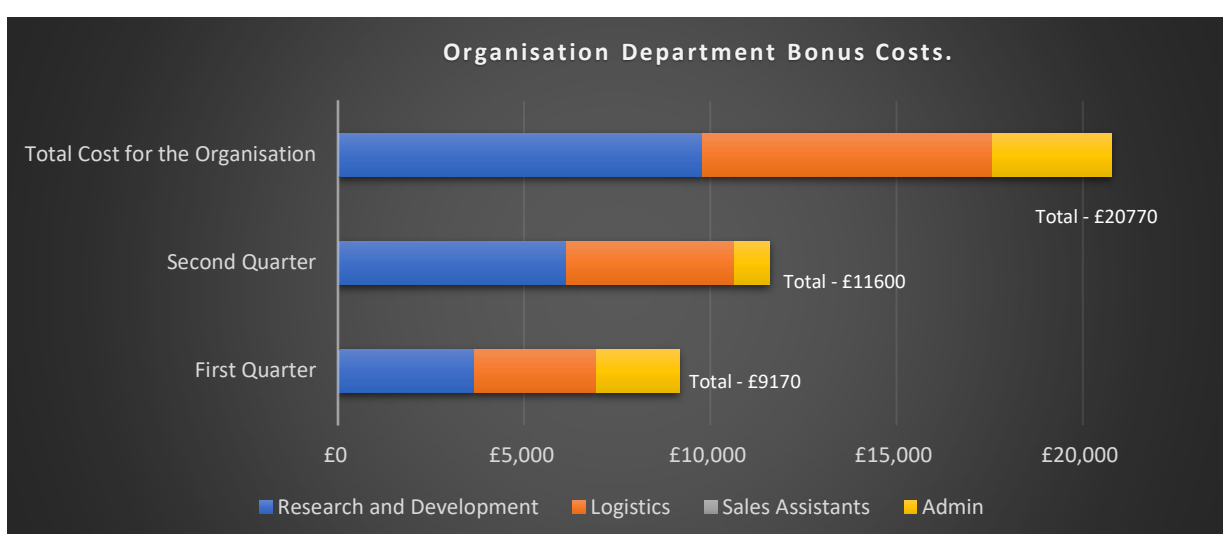
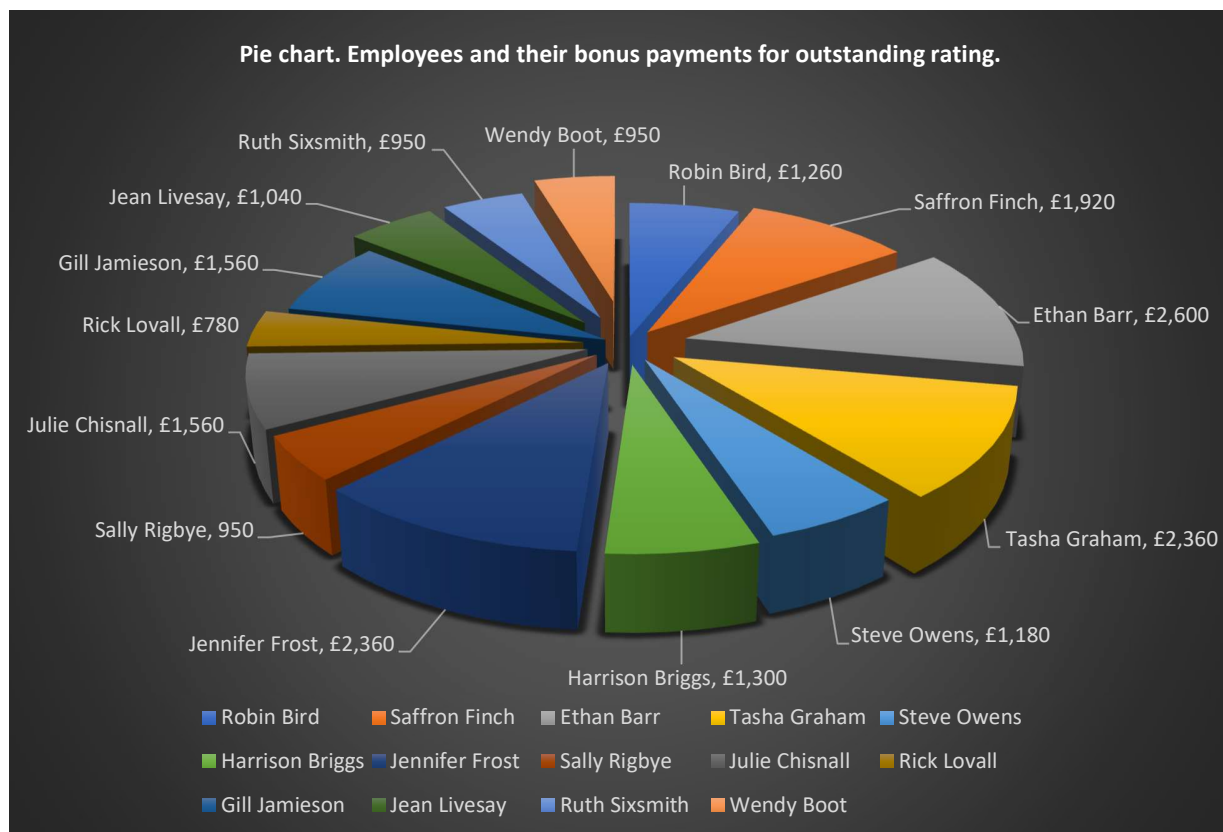
Task 2 – Quarterly Performance Data Review





Organisational total cost for bonus payments

The pie and stacked bar charts below show the organisational costs for those gaining an outstanding in their performance review, totalling at £20,770. This amount was calculated from Table1.0 relating to a four percent (based on their salary) bonus payment entitlement for each individual each quarter.



Research and Development Total Bonus - £9800. Logistics Total Bonus - £7790.

Administration Total Bonus - £3180. Sales Total Bonus - £0.

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Organisational total cost for bonus payments

The pie and stacked bar charts above show the organisational costs for those gaining an outstanding in their performance review, totalling at £20,770. This amount was calculated from Table1.0 relating to a four percent (based on their salary) bonus payment entitlement for each individual each quarter.

Table 1.0 Organisation Bonus Payment Table				
Quarter One	Research & Development	Logistics	Sales Assistant	Administrative
Robin Bird				£1260
Saffron Finch				£960
Ethan Barr	£1300			
Tasha Graham	£1180			
Jennifer Frost	£1180			
Sally Rigbye		£950		
Julie Chisnall		£780		
Rick Lovall		£780		
Gill Jamieson		£780		
Quarter Two				
Saffron Finch				£960
Ethan Barr	£1300			
Tasha Graham	£1180			
Jennifer Frost	£1180			
Harrison Briggs	£1300			
Steve Owens	£1180			
Julie Chisnall		£780		
Gill Jamieson		£780		
Jean Livesey		£1040		
Ruth Sixsmith		£950		
Wendy Boot		£950		

In total 54 employees were evaluated in this quarterly performance review. Just a little over 25% were classed as outstanding in their reviews, with only 11% managing to be rated as outstanding for both quarters.

Recommendation – Review the reward system:

The organisation must evaluate its reward system for the sales team based on value (Armstrong and Taylor 2023). Although the sales team meets KPI targets their performance isn't sufficient for bonuses.

Benefits - a well-structured reward management system can foster performance culture, retain talent, attract new employees and enhance motivation and engagement.

Risks - poorly designed reward schemes can harm relationships between management and employees. Differentiating pay for roles like sales assistant sales assistants may negatively affect performance in other departments.

Financial implications - implementing a new reward system could incur direct costs, potentially increasing quarterly expenses by £12,720 (4% bonus) for the sales team. However, long-term benefits may include improved motivation and ROI, alongside indirect costs related to developing a fair system by HR.

Recommendation – Introducing Mentorship:

Assessing table 1.0, there are team members that can be offered mentoring roles. These mentors can guide, offer pragmatic advice and continually support the people allocated to them (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). Ideal candidates to offer mentoring opportunities are coloured in table 1.0, due to their consistent outstanding rating in the review process.

Benefits – There are opportunities for growth for both the mentor and the mentored. An effective mentor relationship is where both participants take advantage of the learning from each other (CIPD 2024e). Another is, those that are struggling in the team, have the opportunity to learn and be guided from the experienced, successful team members, thus with the view to lower the percentage of underperformance.

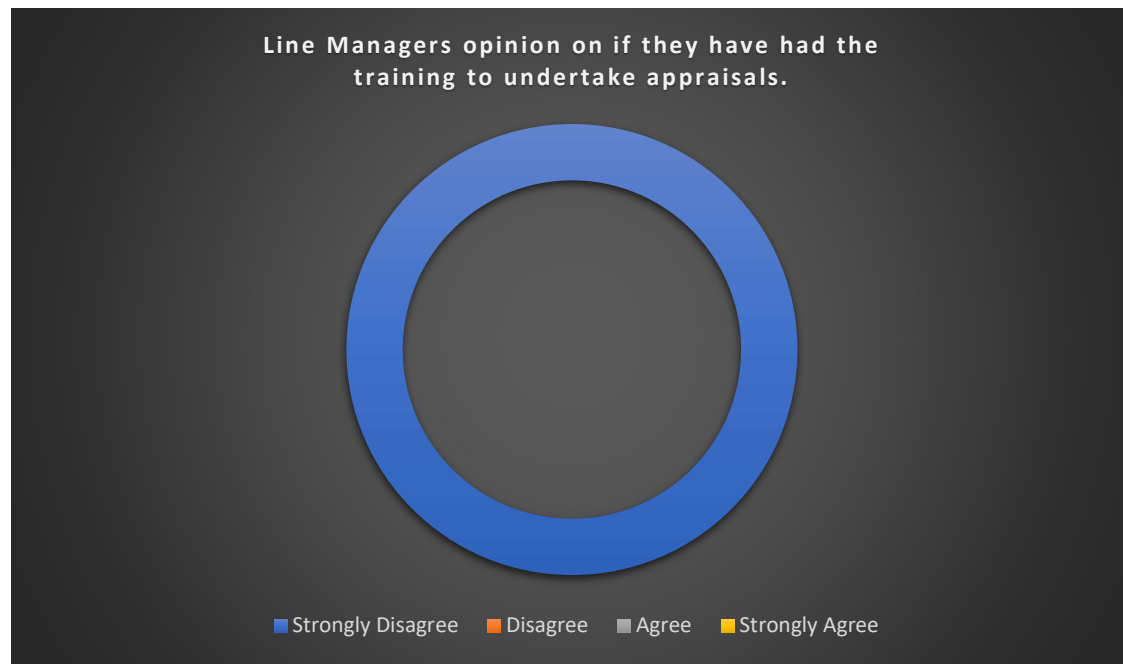
Risks – Mentoring relies on good personal skills, and those recommended in table 1.0 may be good technically at their job but lack the people skills required. Good people skills are hard to learn, but not impossible (CIPD, 2024f). Therefore, if this relationship goes wrong, it will have an impact on both employees, and engagement.

Financial Implications – Whilst mentoring does not require a qualification, there are costs to programmes. For example, the mentor may request being sent on one prior to starting in an official mentor capacity. Long term cost benefit is a more engaged mentee performing at higher levels for the organisation, and in the short term, viewing the cost of the time spent mentoring vs working on their own job, as a positive.

Organisational Survey Data

The data provided specifically looks managers and employees and their views on the organisation's approach to monitoring performance and forms my commentary below.

Recommendation – Appraisal and 360-Degree Feedback Training



The survey highlights that 100% of managers say that they not had training to enable them to undertake appraisals. This links to the employee survey, where over 81% of them noted their managers do not listen to ideas during reviews. As a result, I advise training & introducing 360-degree feedback.

Benefits – Training in new processes such as 360, provides a well-rounded view from colleagues, managers and peers (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). These reviews and applicable training allow a deeper conversation into what they are doing well and discuss ideas the employee may have.

Risks – The process of training for appraisals and performing 360 reviews can be stressful for facilitator and employee. Plus, when asking for reviews from colleagues and peers the honest of feedback can vary.

Financial Implications – To become a qualified facilitator in 360-degree feedback can cost money in the short-term and can be a fairly long-term process.

Recommendation – Challenging Underperformance

According to the survey, 82% of managers feel like they have an issue with challenging underperforming employees. This links clearly within the employee survey where 43% disagree/strongly disagree that their line managers provide constructive feedback.

Benefits – Through challenging underperformance, the organisations managers themselves, become better leaders (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). Employees when provided with constructive feedback in their underperformance, can better understand what is expected of them for their role.

Risks – Managers who are not trained and or lack people skills, could mishandle the situation, and lead to poor morale, decreased productivity, and with escalation claims at the tribunal employment courts (Horne, 2024).

Financial Implications – There are multiple steps to dealing with underperformance, therefore it can be costly and time consuming for managers. Steps include identifying the areas, establish causes, agree on actions, provide support (coaching, training), monitor progress, give more guidance. And, if all fails, start disciplinary procedures (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023).

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