

CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Contributing to the Improvement of Individual and Organisational Performance

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Successful Performance Management should begin at the point of recruitment, ensuring to identify clearly what qualities a person needs to complete a role successfully, this then leads on to a clear and fair recruitment process, with time and investment in to an onboarding process for all employees (CIPD,2020). Furthermore *“organisations with a robust onboarding process improve new hire retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%”* (Laurano,2015).

Up until March 2020, all new starters at Tai Tarian would meet with a member of the HR team for a coffee, chat and to run through a checklist of ‘Key points’ (EV6) and have the chance to ask any questions they may have. They would then meet with a member of the training team to run through the training system. A ‘Corporate Induction’ was then provided to all new starters, once a month, which included, breakfast with the chief executive, and then a day of PowerPoints with employees from different departments such as attending to deliver a talk about their specific areas (EV8,EV9). At this point HR would run through how to access all policies and documents with a snapshot of things such as the ‘Employee Handbook’(EV13), ‘Getting started pack’ (EV14) and ‘Conflict Resolution procedure’ (EV25), (www.taitarian.co.uk).

As it stands any new starters since March 2020 have had the ‘first day’ meeting with HR and the Training team delivered via Zoom meetings. New starters have then been sent the slides of the Corporate inductions, along with links to all policies and procedures (EV7). As a result, I feel new starters are not getting the welcoming experience they deserve, especially in the currently circumstances where staff would be office based and therefore are now working from home.

Please see evidence reference numbers EV1 - EV5, as further backing information for the above.

Tai Tarians expectations, behaviours and values are set out at the forefront of employment within the organisation. This is set out within the Tai Tarian ‘Behaviour framework’ (EV10) and ‘Tai Tarian ‘Mission and goals’ (EV11) and should be used along with the role profile and guidance from the ‘Corporate plan’ (EV35) to set a Performance Management plan (EV12). HR advise managers to go through this document along with an “Employee handbook” (EV13) and employees “Getting started pack” (EV14) which offers basic points for managers to cover, but this is not mandatory, leaving an employee’s first impression of the organisation differential and based upon management capability(www.taitarian.co.uk).

There is clear need for a revised onboarding process, which is streamlined, interesting and set for all employees to experience the same way.

When looking at the Performance Management practice at Tai Tarian I considered the workings of ACAS and the CIPD as credible sources to establish what good performance management looks like.

ACAS (2018) describes Performance management as *“the arrangements that employers use to maintain and improve the performance of their workforce so that the organisation achieves its goals”*.

According to ACAS (2018) good performance management should:

- *“Help everyone in the organisation*
- *Encourage employees to engage with the goals of the business*
- *Improve the relationship between managers and employees*
- *Be fair to all staff.*
- *Importantly, performance management should help employees to better understand business strategy and how their role influences business goals”*. (ACAS, 2018)

According to CIPD good performance management is critical for organisational success. The Performance Management system should create specific objectives aligned to organisation strategy, improve individual performance and in turn improve organisational development as a whole.

key factors of a good performance system include:

- *“Regular feedback and coaching*
- *Learning and development*
- *Goal setting*
- *Effective monitoring*
- *Recognition and reward”* (CIPD,2020)

A Performance Management system is said to be a key component in an employee’s feeling of worth, purpose and expectations, through recognition, it is imperative that deliverers of appraisal should be adequately trained. Investing in training for this will far out way the cost, with benefit of staff development and capability, in turn employees *“are more likely to go ‘beyond contract’ or that ‘extra mile’ for the organisation if managers behave in ways that stimulate and encourage positive attitudes”* (Purcell et al,2013) to work towards organisation goals and increase output and revenue (ACAS,2018).

HR can support line managers in the delivery of such processes by providing expert knowledge and guidance through coaching, to gain “buy-in” from line managers if possible having their input in the development of the procedure would ensure they are on-board to deliver to their teams.

“If managers are the ‘face’ of the people profession to employees, the people profession must be part of ensuring this framework is in place” (CIPD,2019). Hence the need for the HR team to work together with line managers to deliver these processes effectively.

Tai Tarian’s Performance Management (PM) system consists of a process known as an Action Plan for Success framework and MADD (Making a difference dialogue) goals (www.taitarian.co.uk).

The Action plan for Success is started with all new employees or those that transfer into new roles across the organisation. Generally, the Action Plan for Success is run over 6/12 months and is related to a salary increase.

The PM system was launched in 2015, at which point passing of the APFS became linked to a salary increase, this means new starters or employees transferred to new roles start at the 2nd point of a salary grade then after passing, increase to the 5th point. Employees who started pre 2016 are on a yearly increment rise, causing frustration with new/transferred employees getting to higher salary in 6/12 months, whereas longer serving staff would have taken 5 years to get to the same salary.

Looking at the usage rates of the system you can see a dramatic decline since implementation, 2015-2016 shows a 99% completion rate, this may be due to all lot of intervention and support given at the time by the Organisational Development (OD) team to ensure its successful implementation. In 2019 – 2020 the usage dropped to just 25% of the organisation completing. This is mainly made up of new starters, transferred employees, where there is a monetary gain after completing, suggesting a tick box exercise.

The system has the option to record not only the APFS but, goal setting, the mid-term check in, year end evaluation, manager advice check in, catch ups, 1-2-1’s and learning needs. All of which encompass an adequate performance management system, if utilised effectively. Having looked at a selection of ‘completed’ forms, it is clear the system is not being used to its full potential(www.taitarian.co.uk).

This appears to have taken over the traditional yearly appraisal, which Rushmore,K (2017), suggests is not fit for purpose. Regular meetings can add value and meaning, providing a timely response to achievements or issues (Rushmore,K,2017).

When talking with my managers I realised that 1-2-1s, and difficult conversations are taking place, but not documented on the specific Tai Tarian PM system. They are being stored in their own version, Employee Management System (EMS) file). This was used prior to the implementation of the new PM system. This shed a positive light that this is taking place regardless of where the information is stored, after my initial worry that this was not happening at all due to lack of manager capability, which I initially thought may be the case when seeing lack of evidence to prove otherwise.

Feedback from the Senior Management team has been differential in relation to the PM system, some have continued to use certain aspects, others have told their teams to stop using it as it does not add value, and considered a waste of resource and time. With this feeding from the top of the organisation it is easy to see why things are put into the performance plans as a tick box exercise and not for development needs of employees. There is a clear disconnect throughout the departments at the organisation.

With encouragement some line managers have started using the system effectively but unfortunately there has been a particular rise in line managers using the tools to manage poor performance, therefore it is seen as a negative tool and used as a destructive mechanism which, Taylor(2016) highlights as a criticism of a PM system if not used appropriately. This does not promote staff development, motivation, employee's feeling of worth, purpose and expectations, through recognition, which is the intention of the Performance Management System (Purcell,J,et al,2003).

Up until recently the management of the Performance Management process was undertaken by the Learning and Training section of the Organisational Development team. The HR team have recently taken over the management of these processes, investigation shows a variety of goals which have been set to achieve which are un motivational and lacking in clarity. Other managers appear to have taken the goals to the extreme and set unrealistic and unreachable targets, which ultimately would cause frustration amongst teams.

When goal setting, line managers have received training and the use of the 'SMART' acronym is referred to in order do so, along with a brief reference to aligning goals with overall strategic organisational goals, which both the CIPD and ACAS highlight as good practice. Investigation shows that less than half have been set up making use of this guidance, which may be the reason as to why the goals as mentioned are not efficient.

Guidance for mid-year and year end reviews encourage the use of the 'ORCE' acronym, and asking managers to rate the employees overall performance, with a choice of 'Did Great', 'Did Well', 'Did OK', 'Should Do Better'. The guidance then asked the manager to rate employee's potential for career growth. with the option of 'at level, 'ready for more' or 'next level'. In the PM forms that I studied where this had been completed further insight shows that none of the employees that received a 'ready of more' or 'next level' rating have progressed in to a senior role or received any recognition(www.taitarian.co.uk). Indicating that it may have been developed as a tick box exercise, which *"will breed cynicism and distrust"* (www.ipa-involve.com, 2019) raising doubts of their managers credibility and of the organisational as a whole.

When considering the factors previously identified as best practice by the likes of CIPD and ACAS, there is a clear lack of understanding and utilisation of the PM system in place at Tai Tarian.

Please see evidence reference numbers EV16 – EV24 as backing information for the above.

PM throughout the organisation is supported mainly by the 'Conflict Resolution Procedure' (EV25), 'Capability procedure' (EV29) and 'Maximizing attendance policy' (EV32) providing support for dealing with both conduct and capability concerns, this is to ensure best practice and fairness when dealing with a potential outcome of dismissal. This works alongside the 'Behaviours framework' (EV10) which documents Tai Tarians 5 behaviours and the expectations within them.

The HR team are currently reviewing all process and procedures to ensure best practice as set out by CIPD guidance, and the ACAS code of practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures (ACAS,2015), along with Expert HR and HR inform. When dealing with PM both the Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Rights Acts 1996, along with any change in legislation are sought to ensure lawful process (CIPD,2020). Managers are expected to lead any formal proceedings that arise from following the 'Conflict Resolution procedure' (EV25), with an assigned HR team members support. As HR advisor I work with managers to ensure the process is followed to best practice guidance. I have found that managers need a lot of support with this and are very nervous to make a decision, often looking to HR to make the choice. I have heard managers deliver outcomes to employees with the "well HR have said this" which is frustrating as we ensure to only advise our managers, given options for fair outcomes, not tell them what decision should be made. Managers need help with the basics of report writing in these circumstances, primarily to ensure that no bias viewpoint is included. Even though managers have received guidance and training on all aspects of this, there seems to be a 'this is HR's job' so they do not fully engage, thus leaving a lot of support needed by the HR team. When supporting certain managers, I have developed manager 'Templates' and 'Scripts' and 'Guidance' to follow, (EV26,EV27,EV28) which I discuss with managers to provide guidance and I also ensure things are documented in relation to manager/HR responsibilities.

Please see evidence reference number EV31, as further backing information for the above.

My role as HR advisor includes absence management, I am the first port of call for 1st day sickness notifications, monitoring previous absence history and escalating to the HRBP if appropriate. I currently support managers in delivering outcomes based on initially completed the 1st day sickness with all the information needed, to completing the 1st stage formal absence meeting.

The absence policy consists of no triggers and allows for managers discretion when making decisions. Unfortunately, this causes disparity across the organisation as managers do not know when they should progress or not (EV33).

The past 18 months myself and the HR team have worked to encourage a consistent approach to this, providing advice (based on looking at the reasons for absence and specific employees, considering any illness which may fall under the Equality Act,2010). The HR team has encouraged managers to look at absence, which is only based on the past 12 months, then after the third absence we suggest the use of the organisations 'informal caution'. After this point the absence procedure is progressed firstly to the 1st stage formal meeting, then on to 2nd stage formal meeting, at which point the outcome would potentially be dismissal (EV32).

After discussion with my managers I have recently introduced a 'COVID-19 absence checklist' (EV34) to support a COVID-19 flowchart the team produced. This was due to inconsistency across the organisation but also it was clear that even though the team had produced guidance via the flowchart, this was not being referred to when making decisions in relation to this.

Please see evidence reference numbers EV32 and EV33 as backing information for the above.

I have personally had some feedback from my line manager that I sometimes do too much for my managers, which they become reliant on, in turn they then do not see the point in learning and I in turn end up overloaded with work. This is something I am trying hard to minimise, but I have felt that sometimes if I have not initially completed a task myself, how can I then expect to advise and coach my line managers on doing so. I feel as I have grown more confident in dealing with different scenarios, I have been able to take this step back approach.

The support line managers need varies greatly across departments within the organisation. Within the trades departments in particular, managers/ team leaders are those who have long service within the organisation as trades men. When former employees have retired from management roles, these employees have been automatically progressed into management roles, often without training or support to undertake these responsibilities. With the aid of the new ATS system implementation and the development of the 'recruitment guide' (**EV1**) developed by myself and the HR team, recruitment into these positions is now looked at with a focus on leadership qualities and enrolment on to the organisations Leadership 535 Management (**EV36**) course. This is proving a great success and these managers are superseding expectations, whereas the former are lacking in these skills. There has been a focus on all those in leadership going on these courses to bring their management skills up to the appropriate levels but unfortunately some need a lot of hand holding from the HR department.

There is a wide variety of research and theorist definition of what creates a High-Performance Workforce. A set of key principles which underpin High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) have been identified. Taylor (2016) highlights that the principles behind HPW come from an organisation having a range of clear policies and procedures in place, to provide clarity and whole workforce commitment with key expectations. Gov.uk (2013) further expands on this stating that *"practices apply across a range of areas, including approaches to work organisation, employment relations, management and leadership, and organisational development"*.

On considering High Performance Working (HPW) practice at Tai Tarian it is clear that a high amount of work needs to be done to ensure consistency, clear guidance, and buy in to utilise tools such as the performance management system, which are clearly identified as the opposite to what Taylor (2016) identifies as key to 'good' HPW. It is a surprise that the organisation as a whole is striving, no redundancies have been made this year as a result of the pandemic, which has had detrimental effect on many business (source), over 300 staff were furloughed and organisation was able to top up pay so all employees received 100%.

The organisation continues to implement wellbeing programmes, the past 6 months has seen great development in this area, particularly due to the effects on mental health and working from home that the pandemic has had (quote / source). There has been involvement from the Senior Management Team where they have held virtual coffee mornings to get all employees involved; along with holding discussion groups on working from home and how the organisation can support individuals going forward (**EV37, EV38, EV39**). The Chief Executive sent out personalised water bottles, face masks and chocolates to employee's homes.

Recruitment is continuing to grow in line with increased business need. Attrition rates for the organisation in comparison to that of similar housing organisation are also positive (www.chcymru.org.uk, 2020). This could be due to the focus on work life balance, the flexi scheme and being a not for profit organisation, so the employees do not have the pressure of being sales and targets driven like those of the private sector.

Even though the organisation is thriving the successful integration of the PM system can only ensure that employees are receiving the reward and recognition they deserve, encouraging faith in their managers, developing relationships and striving to achieve more for the organisation (Taylor,2016).

Suggestions going forward in relation to the PM system would be:

- Develop working groups to encourage input from service users (encourage the Senior Management Teams involvement and buy-in to promote from top down in the organisation)
- Create a suitable reward / recognition programme for those who have been identified as ready to progress as part of the PM process
- Develop the system to be user friendly
- Develop and provide specific training on the importance of goal settings, the value of good performance management, and step away from yearly meetings, encourage on going feedback between line manager and employee
- Encourage manager feedback and act on suggestions to improve
- Produce clear, user-friendly guidance,
- Incorporate ideas and suggestions from working groups as much as possible and provide a re-launch
- Look at the disparity between salary of new starters/ recent transferred employees and those on the pre-2016 contract that is causing frustration of longer serving employees.

Suggestions going forward in relation to new starters, induction and on boarding:

- Research other organisations to see what 'good' looks like
- Devise working groups to encourage input and buy-in
- Contact new starters from the last 2 years and gain honest feedback
- Produce clear, user-friendly guidance for line manager
- Produce a clear plan for the process ensuring that new starters gain all relevant information to promote high performance.

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