

PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE

Leader guide

Use this checklist to create a great, human-centred performance culture within your team.

Connection and trust

Get to know each other: Good performance conversations rely on good connection. Introduce more personal check-in questions on topics such as wellbeing, and seek to understand your employee's perspective and individual needs.

Understand what work and life drivers are at play so that you can tailor performance goals and ways of working. This is the first step to your employee knowing you've got their back.

Regular and consistent: If you don't have regular weekly or fortnightly 1:1s scheduled with your team, you need to get these in the diary now. Do not reschedule your team's 1:1s unless it is absolutely urgent. The way you spend your time sends an important message about what you value.

Discuss preferences: People in your team will likely differ in how they like to give and receive feedback. Have a conversation early on about this, and consider using a tool like a user manual to understand what good looks like. This allows you to understand different styles and preferences and tackle any discrepancies in style upfront.

Performance

Focus on the conversation, not the paperwork: Performance management is not a system. It's not filling in sections of your HRIS. Focus on good quality conversations and then make sure you keep a record of these.

Feedback, feedback and more feedback: Make feedback a normal part of conversation. This takes practice and also some rigour. Make it a standing agenda item on all 1:1s. Don't hold onto any feedback - give it in real time. Ask your employee for how you can improve as well to make it a two-way conversation.

Reflect & prepare: Reflect before you give feedback. Make sure you are being clear. What specific examples can you draw on? What is the impact of this behaviour on the broader team?

Don't make a praise sandwich: Many people find it hard to give honest and pointed feedback so instead deliver honest feedback between two slices of praise. Try and avoid this as it makes it hard for the recipient to decipher. Be to the point. Recognition has its place, but it isn't to bury constructive feedback.

Take minutes and actions: Meetings are always worthwhile when you take some action. Check-in on actions in each one on one to see if they've been achieved, and if not, what blockers exist. Documenting conversations can also help with reflection and keeping track of themes and key drivers for your employee.

Development

Don't skimp on development: Set a specific goal with a development focus to help sharpen your focus and direct your energy to one targeted area. Writing down goals also increases accountability and likelihood of achieving the goal - so include your development goal alongside your other performance goals and regularly assess progress.

Stretch and fail: As a leader, you set the stage for development. Create a safe environment for failure. Try and think of ways that you can role model stepping out of your comfort zone and failing fast.

Coach, don't advise: Ask lots of questions and try and stop yourself jumping in with anything along the lines of "what I would do is...". Help your employee discover their own solutions and actions they can take. Find a framework (like SCARF) that works for you. Experiment with some different techniques and observe which is effective in motivating and empowering your employee to take action.