

Why you're doing performance management wrong

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The world is changing and changing rapidly around us, yet we continue to do performance management the way it was done 10, 20, even 30 years ago. With these simple steps you can bring your performance management into the present.

Following the suggestions will not only create real value and growth for others, it will simplify and accelerate what has historically been an arduous annual exercise.



your people. your culture. your partner.

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Break it down into bite sized segments.

The world today is packed with information. We as human beings are required to construct, deconstruct and synthesize information in a manner and at a speed that we didn't have to do 20 years ago because we didn't have the technology to do it. With the acceleration of information can come a certain amount of fatigue. By breaking down performance management into bite size pieces, it is easier to digest. We know a lot about adult learning. Be brief yet thoughtful, pragmatic, clear and concrete and your feedback will hit its mark.

Talk about what to do, rather than what not to do.

People already know what not to do (even though they might be doing it). Be positive and encouraging with feedback. Ask them if they could do it over, how would they do it. Allow them time to process.

Provide feedback frequently and consistently.

If you're doing something bite size you can have a quarterly conversation that takes 15 minutes or a monthly one that takes 5 minutes rather than an annual conversation that takes 90 minutes. This allows for more immediate course correction. And of course, solicit feedback about your own impact.

Make room for mistakes.

Mistakes are a key ingredient for learning. If you don't have the opportunity to fail and make a mistake, then you actually do not learn. This can be difficult for companies because it's seemingly counter-intuitive to reward failure. However, if you don't fail you don't end up with inventions, new skill sets or even new products. Consider the reaction we have when someone falls off their bike while learning to ride, or a baby that falls with its first steps. We shape behavior with our encouragement – it informs people that they are "headed in the right direction" and "keep trying." Without skinning our knees, we would not learn to walk.

As I think back on my career and the leaders who I've interviewed over the years, often the highest impact mentoring or coaching moments happened in a nano-second and almost never in an annual, 90-minute review. Following the suggestions will not only create real value and growth for others, it will simplify and accelerate what has historically been an arduous annual exercise.