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Performance Management Success

A Best Practices and Implementation
Guide for Leaders and Managers
of All Organizations

 Springer

Preface

A central purpose of this guide is to identify a framework which links several variables associated with Performance Management, a potentially complex and dynamic subject. Yet based on empirical evidence, empirical conditions, and empirical studies of implementation success – as cited by *Best Practitioners* of Performance Management across organizations and industries – a set of common elements does in fact exist relative to the successful implementation of a Performance Management Process (PMP). The elements are listed as follows:

1. Organization strategy
2. Performance Planning
3. Development Planning
4. Coaching and Feedback
5. Performance and Development Reviews (midyear/annual)
6. Recognition and reward (midyear/annual)
7. People-focused – respect and trust

Recognition of the common elements is based on more than an assumption or a conceptual inventory. Just as it is extremely beneficial to identify and recognize common elements of success, it is equally essential to recognize patterns in variations of Performance Management implementation – especially in the context of human behavior and organizational dynamics. Nevertheless, a set of common elements does tend to exist. What works, works. An additional key purpose of this guide is the identification of actual *Best Practices* useful in the implementation of the common elements supporting a successful Performance Management Process. We also believe our guide will equally benefit organizations that do not have a Performance Management Process currently in place, as well as provide a comprehensive framework in a *Best Practices consideration sense* for those organizations seeking to improve an existing Performance Management Process. Continuous learning and improvement enjoys no limits.

Performance Management Success may or may not be viewed as an original contribution, given the history and extensive tangential range of available literature associated with Performance Management, along with knowing that the claim to originality is a difficult one to establish. However, I hope this guide will be viewed as an original contribution in the sense that common elements, along with some

patterned variation, are collectively identified in an integrative, visual framework that captures their successful implementation. What also does make *Performance Management Success* unique is the focus on the elements of the framework at a macro-level view, yet balanced with a conciseness and realism brought to bear from the applied success of multiple *Best Practitioners*. The completeness of this guide, and the design of the chapters in sync with the flow of the framework elements, identifies benefits, barriers, resource tools and solutions to address barriers, a case study success application, *Best Practitioner* views-comments-actions, and successful behaviors of leaders and managers – for each of the common PMP elements. The potential educational value of this guide – for all leaders and managers – is highly unique. An additional value added of this guide will be as an organizational effectiveness and a training and development resource tool for leaders and managers – at all levels and within all organizations.

The topic of performance is like the weather – everyone likes to talk about it, but few understand what is truly happening within organizations or worse, yet, understand *why*? Individuals and organizations are no different when it comes to performance – regardless of the performance level of focus: individual, team, unit, or organization-wide level. It is important to recognize that Performance Management *lives and exists* simultaneously at all four (4) levels within organizations or institutions. All four (4) levels deal essentially with two basic questions: How am I (or we) doing? And how can I (or we) improve and do even better? Organizations often lose sight of these basic questions or do not know how to best address these very real issues. More proactively, organizations can treat these questions as opportunities – to align people with strategy and goals, to reinforce an optimal performance culture, and to drive and sustain ongoing performance improvement.

People join teams or organizations to contribute and succeed. They certainly don't join to fail or not contribute to a larger mission and purpose greater than themselves. Yet teams and organizations mess up or miss opportunities to not only improve performance but also leverage and sustain high performance.

Organizational performance, organizational culture, and organizational success are interrelated. Ideally, they should all reinforce one another. How? Through an effective Performance Management Process (PMP) that *lives and functions and thrives* at multiple levels within institutions: at the individual, team, unit, and organization-wide level.

All members of teams, or organizations, want to be a part of a high-performing culture. Who would not want to be? That's why people join an organization. And there is no need to get hung up on consistency of semantics defining a high performance organization or a high-performing culture. All organizations have a unique culture. The key question therefore is – does that culture enable and support maximum performance? What are considered *enabling* elements or attributes within a culture? What are considered *detracting* elements or attributes within a culture (Appendix PMO-2) (Appendix PMO-3)? What is most important again is helping individuals and teams to measure performance, improve and build on performance, and sustain a high level of performance success over time.

Performance results and a performance culture work hand in hand. *What* (results and goals) is accomplished and *how* (enabling processes and behaviors) it is accomplished are both absolutely essential to an individual's success, as well as the overall organization's success. Results and culture are not mutually exclusive. In fact, an effective Performance Management culture that consistently enables higher levels of performance can provide a competitive advantage that is difficult to duplicate. Understanding an organization's culture, and implementing an effective Performance Management Process, is absolutely key. The PMP, which is made up of building block elements, helps to both shape and reinforce a desired culture. And a well-functioning culture only serves to support and sustain higher performance over time. An organization's culture and strategy must be in alignment. And a Performance Management Process can serve as a *bridge* for both culture and strategy implementation through alignment of goals and alignment of priority actions along with demonstrated key behaviors required. Simple in concept – but often difficult to achieve. Why?

The answer is relatively straightforward. Many organizations do not understand what an effective Performance Management Process *looks like, feels like, and requires* for effective implementation. It is not a quick fix. It does require commitment and applied practice over time. But once a Performance Management Process and a high-performing culture are established, there is no turning back. Organizational success will not allow you to do that.

The PMP itself does not need to be complex. On the contrary, common elements exist that are foundational and interrelated. The starting point involves total alignment of expectations and goals. The only way to measure performance is to begin with a clear-cut, attainable, well-aligned, and communicated set of expectations – both results-wise (*what*) and behavioral action-wise (*how*). First, start with a road map of how the year will look for the organization and for each unit, team, and individual within the organization. This will not only make a review of the year easier but also avoid surprises at year-end. Second, continually touch base throughout the organization during the year at all organization levels, both formally and informally, with the benefit of management direction and coaching and feedback on performance metrics of importance. Third, the foundational Performance Management Process will prove invaluable during periodic reviews of performance at any individual or organization-wide level, especially when individual, team, and unit evaluation – in the spirit of contributions – are built into the process. Individuals, teams, and units need to have a clear *line of sight* to know how they contributed to the overall organization's success.

Expectations associated with Performance Management can assume many forms. A series of *Propositions* – which can be thought of as *beliefs, principles, predictors, or expectations* – of Performance Management success have been identified and appear within many chapters of the guide. The *Propositions* represent a summary of high-order beliefs of many *Best Practitioners* and their respective organizations regarding successful Performance Management implementation.

Organizational success is contingent upon alignment of expectations – at all levels. What is problematic is that many organizations underestimate the power and impact of a well-functioning Performance Management Process. A PMP should

convey and reinforce how expectations and success will be defined. And an organization's management and recognition of achievement, or success, says a lot about its culture. It is also problematic that many organizations do not truly understand, or leverage, the impact of their current organizational culture on total performance. Culture, in its simplest sense, can be thought of as a *way of life*. A *way of life* most definitely extends to how work is performed, at all levels, within organizations. That *way of life* can be driven, reinforced, and sustained by an effective Performance Management Process that consistently aligns with a cultural direction.

Are you ready for a deeper dive into the *what* and the *how* of an effective Performance Management Process and to support a higher performing culture for the organization you now belong to? Great! I invite you to read on to gain a better sense of the essential Performance Management Process elements, as well as understand better and prepare for barriers along your way. Essential behaviors and actions for leaders, managers, and supervisors have also been identified to support your journey, your continual learning, and your application of essential principles and Best Practices – on the job – where it matters most and will make a significant difference. You are invited to become a *Best Practitioner* of Performance Management within your own organization. Success ahead.

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Contents

1 Introduction: Performance Culture and Organizational Effectiveness	1
2 Levers of Organizational Change	9
3 Organization Strategy	15
4 Performance Planning	27
5 Development Planning	37
6 Coaching and Feedback	49
7 Performance and Development Review	61
8 Recognition and Reward	77
9 People-Focused: Respect and Trust	89
10 Performance Management Process: Evaluation	101
11 Performance Management Process: Diagnosis	107
12 Performance Management Process: Considerations and Options	115
13 Conclusion	121
Glossary	123
Appendix 1	127
Appendix 2	155
About the Authors	159