

Topic: Performance Management

Title: Recommendations for implementing performance management systems in organisations.

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Executive Summary

The terms Performance Appraisal and Performance Management have been used interchangeably in the literature to describe the same process, yet there are important differences between the two systems. Performance Appraisal involves rating the past performance of the employee and setting new performance objectives, whereas Performance Management uses past performance as a platform to improve future performance. A Performance Management System (PMS) benefits the organisation by ensuring that the day-to-day activities of employees are aligned with, and promote the organisations' goals. The employee benefits by having regular feedback on performance and being provided with development opportunities to improve their performance. A critical aspect often overlooked is that not only goal achievement is important, but how the goal was achieved is equally important, the corporate responsibility aspect.

It is unrealistic to expect that when a PMS is implemented, employees will immediately be motivated to perform better, and any performance issues (perceived or real) will be immediately resolved. To realise the full potential benefits from the PMS, the organisation must be prepared to invest resources to ensure that the employees and managers "own" the system, otherwise it will be treated as a compliance activity and neither the employees nor the organisation will benefit from the system. No PMS will ever be perfect or complete, and as the organisation evolves, so must the PMS evolve with the organisation.

This report will review the common issues encountered with PMS, and provide recommendations for implementing a PMS within an organisation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Performance Appraisal = Performance Management?

Numerous authors such as Tahvanainen (2000), Fletcher (2001), Furnham (2004), den Hartog et al. (2004), and Rao (2008) have commented that the terms Performance Appraisal and Performance Management have been used interchangeably in the literature. However there is an important difference between the two systems, and before progressing further, the difference between Performance Appraisal System (PAS) and Performance Management System (PMS) will be briefly summarised.

Traditionally, PAS are annual events that rate the past performance of employees and determine the employees pay rise or performance bonus. If the appraisal identified performance issues, then development or training plans may be assigned, often a considerable time after the initial requirement. New performance goals for the next year will be assigned to the employee which may or may not have some relation to the employees past performance.

In contrast, a PMS encompasses a much broader scope of activities, such as continual feedback (Roberts, 1998), managers and employees review performance in a collaborative manner to set new goals and development objectives (den Hartog et al., 2004), coaching (Latham et al., 2005), and social and motivational aspects (Fletcher, 2001). Performance appraisal is just a small component of a PMS. While each organisation will tailor the PMS to suit their unique requirements, there are certain fundamental characteristics that all PMS share, such as:

- Alignment of the employees' goals with the organisation's mission, vision and values, providing the employee with clear linkage on how their performance supports the organisation's performance objectives.
- Regular review and feedback on individual and organisational performance, during which, employee and organisational improvement plans will be reviewed and updated when appropriate.

These activities are intended to align the employees activities with the organisations' strategic objectives, enhance the employees performance, and ultimately improve the organisation's performance (Tahvanainen, 2000). The reader is referred to Rao (2008) for more detailed comparison of PAS and PMS, but the most significant difference is that PAS focuses upon rating past performance, whereas PMS focuses upon improving future performance.

1.2 Why is Performance Management Important?

Authors such as Glendinning (2002), Neary (2002), Furnham (2004), Graham (2004), Buchner (2007) and Helm et al. (2007) have noted that PMS is crucial to organisational performance for reasons such as:

- Facilitates the organisation achieving its vision and business objective.
- Prerequisite to developing a performance culture within the organisation.
- Aligning the employees' performance goals with the organisation's strategic goals.
- Ensure the individual has clarity regarding performance expectations.

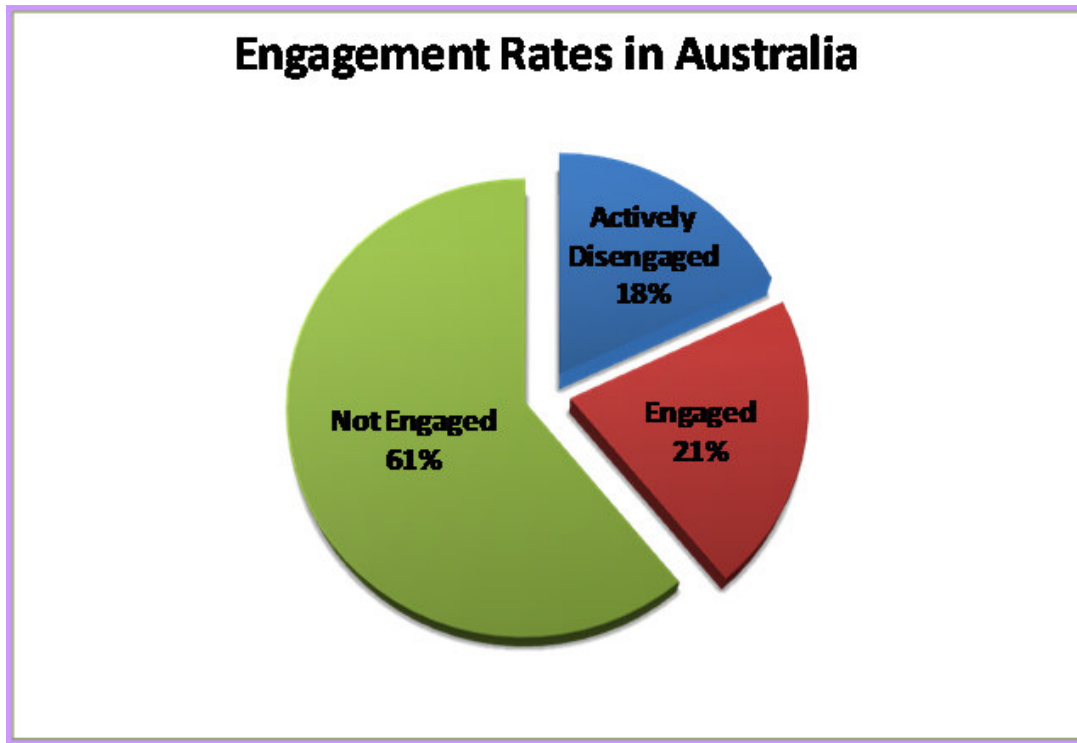


Figure 1: Estimated engagement of employee in Australia based upon data from the Gallup organisation from Acelero Performance Management Presentation, (2009).

- Improves employee performance and identifies talented individuals for promotion (succession planning).
- Reinforces linkage between pay and performance.

Performance management practitioners such as Ken Sheridan (2009, pers. comm. 19 September 2009) have observed organisational improvements as previously described, plus additional benefits such as establishing trust and engagement between the employees and the organisation when a transparent PMS is implemented.

As shown in Figure 1, 79% of employees are either not engaged, or actively disengaged from the organisation, and whose performance is not supporting the

organisations' goals. In the Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) report **Closing the Performance Gap** (2002, p.5), only 5% of managers in member organisations indicated that they were very satisfied with their company's performance management processes. Included in the CLC report **Improving Employee Performance in the Economic Downturn** (2008, p.20) was results of surveys of employee attitudes towards their organisation, which showed only 25% believed that they would be rewarded for their loyalty, and 18% believed that the organisation had the employees best interests in mind. All of these results highlight the need for organisations to reconnect with their employees if they are to improve performance.

Baker (1999) and Rao (2008) stated that if organisations expect their employees perform and add value to the organisation, then the organisation has a reciprocal obligation provide it employees with interesting and challenging work, and provide the development opportunities necessary for the employees to improve. Without an effective PMS, organisations will struggle to meet these expectations.

2. Academic and Industry Research of PMS

2.1 Motivation Theory and Performance Management Systems

From the literature review, there appears to have been limited attempts to analyse PMS in terms of motivation theories. Many of the papers gloss over motivational aspects in PMS, or assume an underlying motivational aspect such as expectancy theory (Guest, 2001) or organisational justice (Latham et al., 2005). Of the few papers that attempted to link motivation theory with PMS, Steers et al. (2004) and Buchner (2007) were the only authors found who provided a detailed analysis of the application of motivational theories in PMS.

Steers et al. (2004) provides a concise historical review of the development of various motivation theories and the reader should refer to the paper for further details. Employee motivation, both practical and theoretical, has a central role in management, yet Steers et al. (2004) noted that the goal oriented approach of many PMS's appear to use reinforcement models or expectancy theory as the underlying motivational theory and disregard other theories. Buchner (2007, p.59) stated that many PMS models had either weak theoretical foundations, or "*do not take full advantage of existing theories of work motivation*", a finding that surprised the author considering PMS requires a significant investment by an organisation.

Many PMS's appear to take a *black-box* approach to employee motivations, assuming that regardless of an individuals specific motivation, the end result will be the same for all employees (Bourguignon, 2004). These black-box approach disregards well know motivation theories that individuals will view, value and react to a reward differently. Rather than treating the individuals within a group as having the

same motivation drivers, PMS needs to be flexible enough to cater for the different motivations of individuals, a view also supported by Larsen (2007).

2.2 Performance Management Research

2.2.1 Performance Management Systems Models

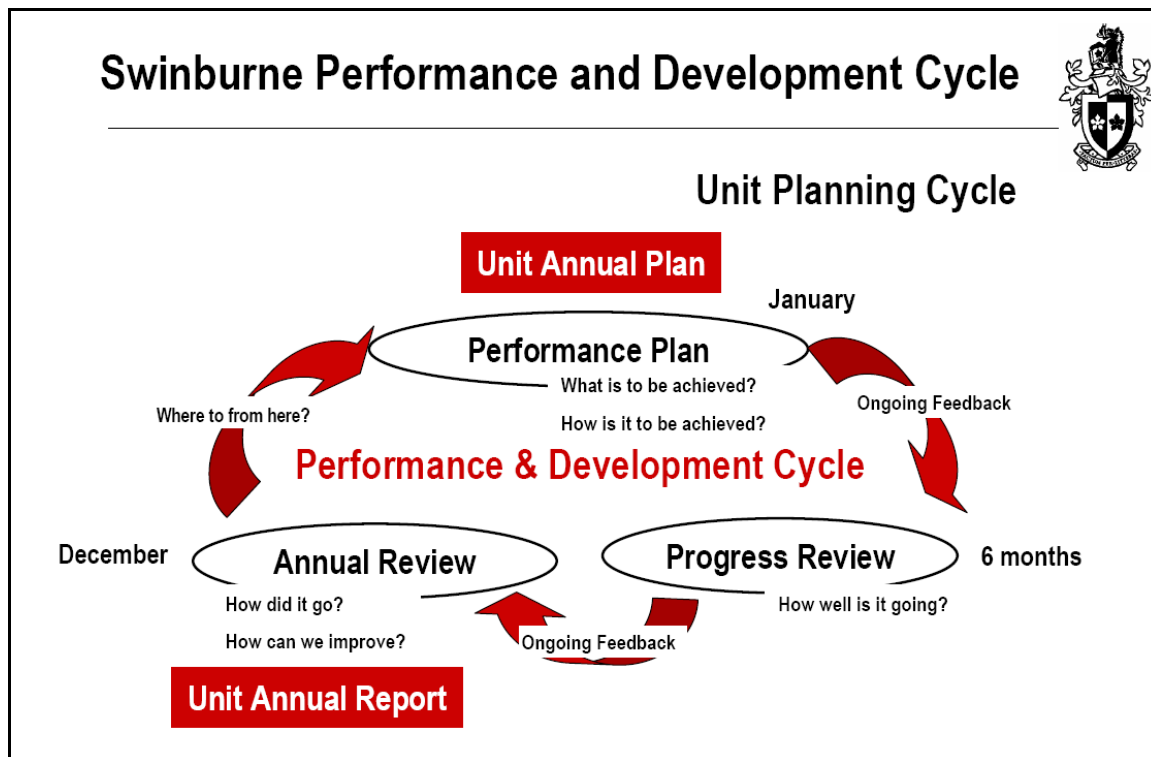


Figure 2: Swinburne University (2006) performance and development cycle.

Various PMS models have been forwarded over the years by researchers (e.g. den Hartog et al., 2004) and organisations (e.g. Swinburne University, 2006, Figure 2). In many cases the differences between the models are superficial since share many fundamental features such as goal alignment, ongoing performance feedback and development plans. The report **Results Oriented Cultures** (US GAO, 2002, pp.4-6) reviewed performance management initiatives in Australia, Canada, New Zealand

and the United Kingdom and noted that these countries used PMS for the following purposes:

- Create linkage between the individuals and organisational goals.
- Use competencies to provide a fuller assessment of individual performance.
- Link pay to individual and overall organisational performance.
- Foster organisation wide commitment to results oriented performance management.

An interesting observation is that many of the PMS models reviewed appear to be proposed without reference to the organisation context, such as the organisational culture, the reasons (explicit and implicit) for implementing, or the behaviours and competencies that the organisation wishes to promote.

2.2.2 Issues with Performance Management Systems

The literature provides numerous examples of problems with PMS's that organisations have experienced. The CLC (2002, p.x) report noted that despite considerable investment, many organisations expressed disappointment with their PMS outcomes. The CLC cites Narrowly Defined Ownership, Disconnect with Strategy, and Failure to Execute as three significant reasons for these findings. The gap between PMS strategy and execution (see Figure 3), ultimately hampers an organisations' ability to leverage the PMS to drive business performance and results. As Furnham (2004) observed, simply implementing a PMS will not increase employee motivation, and the organisation must be prepared to invest significant

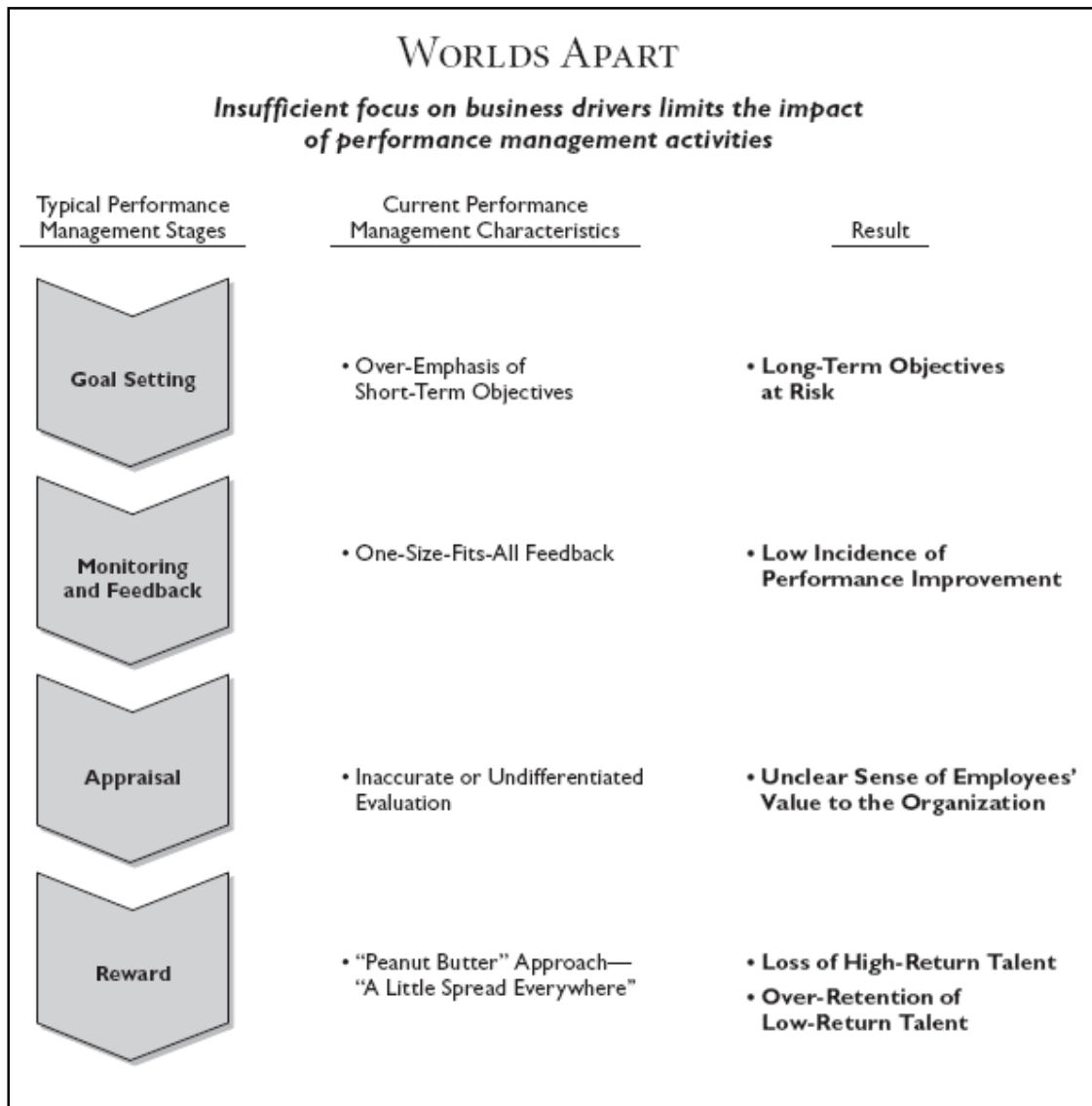


Figure 3: The disconnect between PMS strategy and implementation results in the PMS not supporting the organisations business goals (CLC, 2002 p.10).

amounts of time and resources to ensure that execution fulfils the goals of the PMS. This section will review some of the more significant reasons cited in the literature for PMS not fulfilling its potential.

PMS is intended to be a vehicle to establish a partnership between employee and organisation, yet Buchner (2007) found that many PMS implementations are

essentially imposed upon the employee by the organisation. As authors such as Buchner (2007) and Roberts (1998) have found, this situation leads to a lack of ownership of the PMS by line managers. This is a major issue since the success of PMS is dependent upon the perceptions of Line Managers due to their influence upon their employees (Harris, 2001). The net result is that employees are not motivated by the PMS and treat it as a compliance process, rather than a partnership providing opportunities to improve the performance of both the employee and the organisation.

The Watson Wyatt report **2006/2007 Strategic Rewards Report: Aligning Rewards With the Changing Employment Deal** (2006, p.14) indicated that 63% of organisations believed that their line managers lacked the necessary skills to effectively manage performance. Amongst the recommendations (2006, p.16) was the provision of frequent training for managers on goal setting, performance measurement, and making and communicating compensation decisions. Tahvanainen's (2000) study of performance management experiences of expatriates working for Nokia highlights the challenges of performance managing employees in different geographic locations from themselves and the need for training.

An impact of managers lacking performance management skills is inaccurate appraisal ratings, as noted by the CLC (2002, p.52) report and van der Heijden & Nijhof (2004), with the rating inaccuracies having the follow characteristic:

- High rating in a few key goals overrides poor ratings from other goals (**halo**).
- Managers rate majority of individuals either highly (**leniency**), in the middle (**central**) or lowly (**severity**), rather than using the full rating scale.

- Rating based upon the initial (**primacy**) or most recent (**recency**) observations, rather than the entire review period.

As stated by Tahvanainen (2000), Roberts (1998) and van der Heijden & Nijhof (2004), rating biases can and are being addressed through the increasing use multiple feedback sources, such as 360° feedback. However, van der Heijden & Nijhof (2004) observed that even with 360° feedback rating bias can occur, with anonymous feedback generally more accurate. Ken Sheridan (2009, pers. comm. 24 September 2009) stated that unless the people providing 360° feedback are trained in how to provide feedback, ratings will remain inaccurate and be of little value.

In CLC (2002, p.5) reported that building employee talent was considered to be one of the cornerstones of PMS, yet only 3% of managers believed that they were actually held accountable for building employee talent. A specific recommendation by CLC (2002, p.18) is for managers be held accountable for performance improvement, a view stated previously by Fletcher (2001). This specific linkage was observed by Ready & Conger (2007) in HSBC and Procter & Gamble, where talent development was viewed as critical to future of the organisation, and managers were judged upon how they developed talent (succession planning). Ken Sheridan (2009, pers. comm. 24 September 2009) indicated that Australian research indicates that while employees join an organisation, 70% of leaving employees indicate that they are leaving because of their manager rather than the organisation. Again this highlights that importance of training managers to be able to performance manage.

Roberts (1998) noted that an employees goals can actually be contradictory to the organisations' stated goals and vision. For example, when goals focus on bottom line results without reference to how the goals are achieved, a *result is all that matters* mentality can arise, which can lead to unethical behaviours as employees pursue the end result at exclusion of other considerations. Many organisations include the value of teamwork in their values or mission statements (e.g. BHP Billiton, Stockland websites), yet goals are set that emphasise individual rather than team performance. Even the manner in which goal is designed can be contradictory, such as organisation wishing to encourage certain behaviours, but the set goals for employees that are result focused rather than more appropriate trait based goals.

2.3 Current Industry Practice

When the issues highlighted he previous section are addressed, organisations can realise significant benefits from their PMS. Stockland is an ASX 100 listed company, with a performance culture, and its PMS (see Figure 4) has been central to Stockland to it achieving and supporting this culture (N MacDonald, pers. comm. 8 September 2009). Stockland's PMS processes are aligned with the *best practices* that have reviewed previously in this section, such as:

- Alignment of individual goals with organisations goals.
- Regular performance review meetings between individuals and supervisors to review performance and revise development plans.
- Balanced scorecard approach to goal setting.

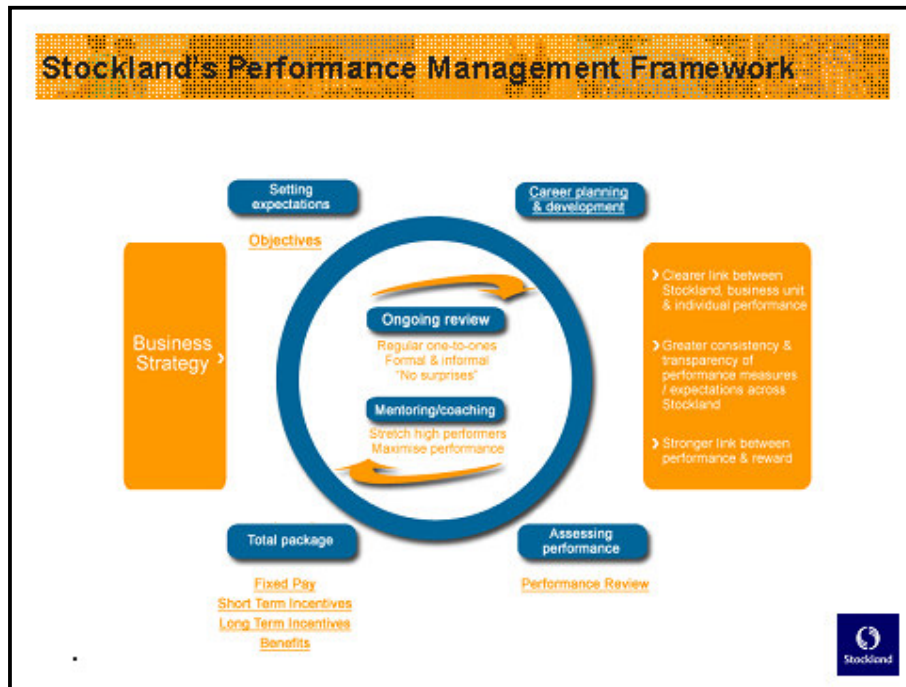


Figure 4: Stockland PMS (N MacDonald, pers. comm. 8 September 2009). Note the similarity with the Swinburne University model described previously in Figure 2.

Stockland's PMS requires for every employee to have (explicit) goals from each of Stockland's balanced scorecard elements (N MacDonald, pers. comm. 8 September 2009) of:

1. **Business:** The employees impact upon the business performance.
2. **Stakeholder:** The employees' relationship with internal and external stakeholders.
3. **People:** Collaboration with colleagues.
4. **Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability:** Achieving objectives ethically and sustainably to the benefit of all stakeholders.

As a result, there is greater consistency and clarity of performance measures across Stockland (fairness), alignment of employees work with Stockland's corporate vision and goals, and a stronger link between employee performance and reward (N MacDonald, pers. comm. 8 September 2009). The reason Stockland require employee goals to include corporate responsibility was that Stockland considered it "important to emphasise that it is not just about **what** was achieved, but also about **how** they achieved it, and in particular that behaviours should be aligned to our values." (D Lewis, pers. comm. 18 September 2009).

The key factors contributing to the success of Stockland's PMS was investing in user training; linking to system to the *what's in it for me* (WIFM) motivation factor for employees; and focusing on the positives such as describing what superior (high) performance looked like in comparison to expected performance (D Lewis, pers. comm. 18 September 2009).

Stockland were able to address the ownership issue by training line managers to be trainers of their colleagues, which helped with buy in and provided local "champions" to support the process. This process meant that Stockland staff saw the PMS as their process rather than a HR imposed process (D Lewis, pers. comm. 18 September 2009). As with Stockland, Acelero (Sheridan, 2009, pers. comm. 18 September 2009) has also observed that successful PMS implementations have a strong WIFM factor. This is critical as ultimately "capability and belief must come from the line", as performance management is a line manager rather than HR responsibility and must be owned by the line managers. The role of HR is to develop, monitor and administer the PMS rather than drive it.

Acelero (Sheridan, 2009, pers. comm. 18 September 2009) has found that PMS must be implemented as a change management activity, with communication and training for all key stakeholders. Acelero advises the organisation to initially target managers who are receptive to change and good at managing people for initial training and implementation since they are more likely to support the process and ensure its success. These managers can become the champions that help roll the process out through the rest of the organisation.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Summary

The organisation must view PMS holistically, encompassing the elements shown in Figure 5. The first element is the organisations culture, does it have desire or capability to embrace performance as a culture. Without this capability or desire, the PMS is likely to become a compliance activity rather than adding value to the organisation and individual employees. The second is to ensure that employees have of the skills, behaviours and competencies that allow them to understand and use the PMS. The third is the methodology, the performance management processes, what it measures, how and when. The final component is an enabling technology to optimise the benefits for both the individual and organisation.

The model (Figure 6) shares many of the basic steps of previously reviewed PMS's. It is assumed that as the organisation has already addressed the issues of

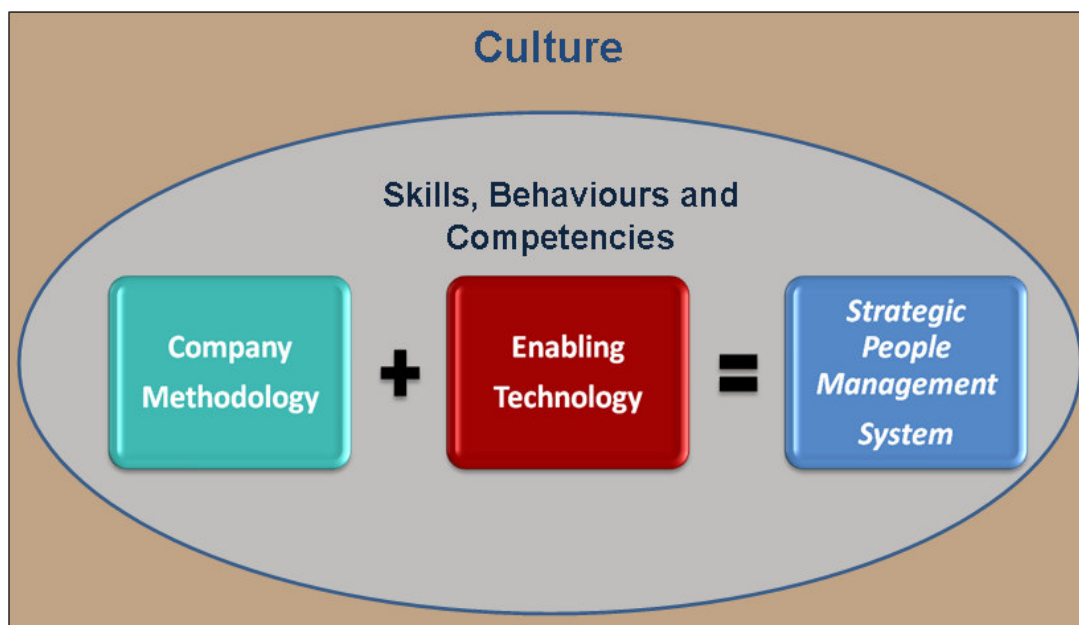


Figure 5: Summary of the components of a PMS. Important to note that the methodology can not be considered in isolation from context of the organisation (Acelero, 2009).

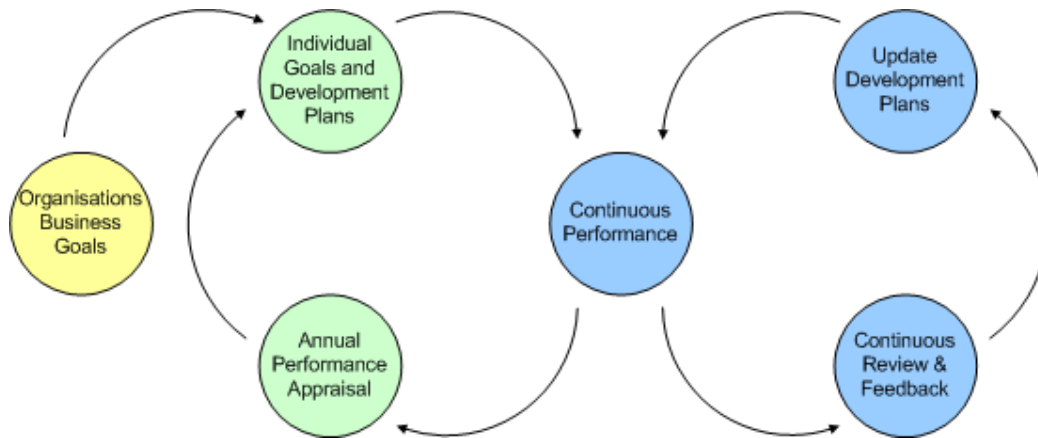


Figure 6: Recommended PMS model. The left hand side (yellow and green circles) represent annual processes that are performed once per year. The right hand side (blue circles) represents processes that are performed on a regular or continuous basis. The entire process can be viewed as a continuous cycle through the two lobes, a symbolic infinity (∞) symbol. This model shares the three (3) components of PMS described by McAfee & Champagne (1993) of performance planning; performance management; and performance appraisal.

performance culture and identified the skills, behaviours and competencies its employees need to have.

3.2 Goal Setting and Goal Alignment

The employees' goals are set at the beginning of the year based upon two inputs. The first input is the organisational goals as set out in the business plan, which ensures that the employees' goals are aligned with organisations goals. The second input is the employees' performance from the previous year, which highlights any development needs and ensures that the new goals are realistic (achievable) and consistent with the employees past performance. The employees' goals should have the following characteristics:

- Goals incorporate elements from the organisations balanced scorecard, mission and vision statements.

- Goals should emphasise behaviours rather than end results. This will ensure that desired behaviours are encouraged and rewarded.
- Goals should be within the employees' control, observable and measurable.
- Goals should be weighted so that no single goal dominates, otherwise the goals will not be balanced.

In summary, employees' goals must align with the organisations business goals AND be consistent with the organisation mission and/or vision statements. While achieving financial targets are important to success of the organisation, of equal importance is the manner in which those financial targets are achieved, such as ethics, or did it contribute to the development of colleagues.

3.3 Continuous Reviews and Feedback

During the course of the year, there must be regular feedback and reviews performed of the employee's performance. These interim reviews can result in updates to the employees' goals and development plan if appropriate. As these discussions are essentially a learning tool, the discussions must focus on:

- relevant to the goals;
- behaviours rather the personality; and
- desired (positive) rather than undesired (negative) behaviours.

As observed by Furnham (2004), unless feedback is constructive it will have little effect upon behaviour. During the review and feedback sessions, the manager must be aware of the employees' motivation factors, and endeavour to phrase the goals

and development plans in terms of the employees' motivation. In simple terms, address the *what's in it for me factor*. A mentor should be identified for the employee to work with on their development plans, otherwise the plans are unlikely to be actioned.

3.4 Annual Performance Appraisal

At end of year, and the annual performance appraisal is performed, and since the employee has already received performance feedback through the year, the appraisal should be a *formality*. The appraisal rating system should be simple with the minimum number of ratings necessary while still remaining relevant to the organisation. The final performance rating should be determined by a known formula, rather than assigned by the manager on a *gut feel* basis.

In order to negate the effects of bias, performance feedback should be obtained from as many sources as practical (180° and 360° feedback). As noted previously in this report, the appraisal accuracy will be a function of the capabilities of individuals performing the appraisal, and the time allocated to complete the appraisals. Therefore, the organisation must allocate sufficient resources to train users on regular basis, and sufficient time must be allocated for appraisals. Failure to do either will result in inaccurate ratings, or the process becoming a perfunctory exercise, neither of which adds value to the individual employee or organisation.

3.5 Enabling Technology

To gain the greatest benefit from the PMS a suitable technology tool should be used. In the case of Stockland, the use of an on-line PMS tool provided tangible benefits to the organisation, including ability to ensure development plans in line with “set

objectives and ensure there is a direct correlation between the two thus providing employees with growth and opportunity within the business” (N MacDonald, pers. comm. 18 September 2009). This capability is critical in flat organisational structures where the development opportunities are often through horizontal movements rather than vertical promotion (N MacDonald, pers. comm. 18 September 2009).

4. Conclusion

Simply implementing a PMS by itself will not fix any perceived performance issues, nor will it instantly motivate employees to better performance. As outlined in the recommendations (section 3), organisations implementing PMS must take a holistic approach remembering that PMS involves far more than performing an annual appraisal and expecting performance to improve as a result. As stated by Latham et al. (2005) and Ken Sheridan (2009, pers. comm. 19 September 2009), the cultural transformation to performance based can take years to achieve and requires the organisations to commit the necessary resources. A PMS can be a critical tool for the organisation to achieve the transformation.

Many of the reasons organisations report disappointing results from their PMS can be attributed to either implementation or execution, resulting in line managers and employees not taking ownership of the process and treating the PMS as a compliance activity rather than an opportunity to improve performance. When these issues are addressed, and the organisation commits resources to the process, the organisation can expect benefit as outlined in section 1.2, and exemplified by Stockland (section 2.3).

No PMS will ever be either perfect or complete, and as the organisation evolves, so must its PMS evolve with it. The primary purpose of PMS is to facilitate discussion between the employee and their manager. The organisation benefits by the day-to-day activities of employees aligned with and promoting the organisational goals. The employee will benefit by having continual feedback regarding performance and opportunities to improve. A critical aspect of the goals is that they must not only

emphasise the achieving the goals, but must place equal emphasise upon how the goal was achieved, the corporate responsibility aspect.

Finally, the organisation must **not** view its PMS as a cost, but as an investment in the organisations future. When the organisation commits to making the necessary investment, the benefits that organisations can realise are substantial, as exemplified by the example of Stockland.

5. Glossary

Acronym	Description
CLC	Corporate Leadership Council
HR	Human Resources
PAS	Performance Appraisal System
PMS	Performance Management System
US GAO	US General Accounting Office

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