

# THE AUTHORITY GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



How to build a culture of  
excellence in the workplace

**GENE JOHNSON**

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## **The Authority Guide to Performance Management**

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What we fear doing most is usually what  
we most need to do.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**



# Introduction

Performance management is one of the most contentious human resources practices within the workplace. It has huge potential to impact positively on the success of an organisation, because it can provide clarity about and information on the direction of a company's business objectives and enhance employee motivation to achieve them. Yet, the negativity surrounding typical performance management systems' 'flawed' processes, inputs and, most notably, performance ratings can seriously detract from any positive outcomes, even to the point of derailment.

With this in mind, employers are taking action to overhaul their performance management systems. The most obvious trend, albeit only among a small number of employers, has been to eliminate performance ratings and simplify processes. However, more successful organisations will look more broadly and focus on ensuring that they are shaping a *performance culture*, where performance excellence is expected and reinforced. For many workplaces, this will involve significant change management. While this will likely involve process changes, it's vital that these are a minor focus and, indeed, that performance management processes are simplified. The main focus should instead be on

the core aspects of setting performance expectations (i.e. goal setting), feedback and equitable reward.

This book is about successful performance management through a culture of performance excellence. Specifically, it offers guidance on how to build and shape such a performance culture. It also addresses other relevant aspects, such as clarity around the purposes for conducting performance management, ensuring alignment with strategic business objectives and organisational values, and how to manage the ‘mechanics’ of performance management processes without over-engineering them.

## What is performance management?

Very broadly speaking, performance management can be anything that facilitates or enhances the performance of employees in the workplace. It works to align employee efforts with strategic organisational objectives. In this way, resources can be directed to where they are needed, whether they are basic feedback, development support or performance incentives.

Practically and operationally, performance management usually refers to a system or set of processes that encompasses:

- the setting of individual performance goals between manager and employee
- feedback on and review of goal progress
- reward for goal attainment
- development actions when goal attainment falls short or could be enhanced.

A typical performance process, at least one maintained by larger organisations, looks like this:



A performance cycle typically runs over a year and is quite a formal affair. That is, both manager and employee are required to complete standard forms, documenting, first, plans for the year (performance goals and development objectives) and then meeting later to review progress (usually a year later, sometimes every six months).

Assessment of the employee's performance attainment results in a rating. As processes go, this one is often criticised as an inflexible, administrative juggernaut with little meaning – a 'tick-box exercise'. In organisations with a weak performance culture, this may indeed be true, but not so in cultures of performance excellence. Not to worry, this process can be rectified and transformed as long as two key elements are present: clear expectations (goal setting) and feedback (performance review).

## What this book is *not* about

This book is *not* about procedures and forms. It's not one of those 'how to' books. Don't get me wrong: this book offers plenty of models, techniques and tips on what to do. However – and it's a BIG 'however' – without the right culture, such tools will lack effectiveness and *oomph*. To emphasise the point, without the right culture, you'll be running an uphill race, ticking the box, working too hard towards nothing, hitting a brick wall, wasting resources... you get the picture.

This book is about the elements that make up a performance culture. Focus on understanding those elements and how you can improve them in your workplace. Once they're in place, you'll find that you probably have already implemented some of the tools, but they will feel natural and part of 'how things are done' – rather than like add-ons.

It's also worth mentioning that this book is not a 'how to' change management guide. That would take a whole other book to achieve. Rather, as the focus is on building a successful performance culture, this book offers some guidance on how to set up your change process for success. The final chapter on 'bringing about cultural change' provides a framework for understanding the most important aspects of change. For a deeper understanding of change management, you'd be advised to identify a recognisable model and read up on it – you could even get certificated as a change master!

The intended audience for this guide is a 'practitioner' in the workplace. This includes managers of people, leaders of organisations and HR professionals. The common aim for these individuals is that they all want to change the culture of their organisations. The people manager may want to be able to expect excellence from their team and help them grow. The leader may want to increase productivity and quality and help their organisation prosper and grow. The HR professional wants to support both their leaders and people managers in building a performance culture.

### How to read this book

You can read this book in one of two ways. The first is to read it from cover to cover, to get an overview of a performance culture. If you're looking for some quick insights, however, the alternative is to read the very next chapter on what a performance culture consists of, then delve into specific chapters. Each chapter concerns one of the individual cultural elements, and you might have a particular interest in one – say, a feedback environment – or you may be aware that you need to work on a particular issue. This book is meant to be that practical.

There are a number of exercises listed in this book for you to use. They are intended to be completed by groups of decision makers and you may want to review them first individually in order to get a heads-up on what the relevant issues may be.

## Does your business encourage performance excellence?

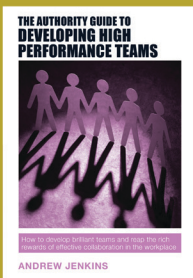
In this *Authority Guide* you will learn how to inspire your team with your organisational vision and values, set clear performance expectations, give and receive real-time feedback and, as a manager, become a catalyst for individual performance success. These are all essential to building and sustaining an excellent performance culture. Work psychologist, Dr Gene Johnson, teaches you how to focus on a results-driven organisation, how to build it and how to not get muddled up in the mechanics of the process.



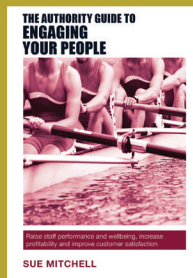
**“This book provides a solid, no-nonsense explanation of the link between psychological, cultural and organisational mechanisms, which need to support each other in order to promote a high-performance culture.”**

Marianne Fischer-Rasmussen, head global people development for Autoneum

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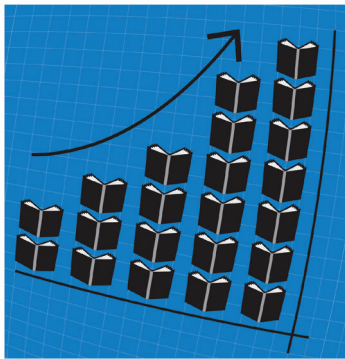


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with your customers to create lifetime loyalty

**PAUL AVINS**

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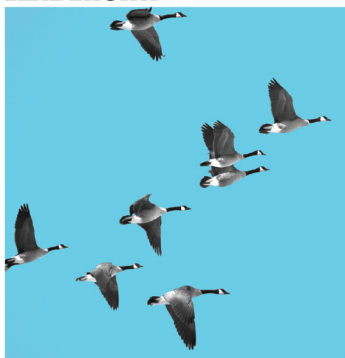


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In this Authority Guide you will explore how to set expectations, give and receive real-time feedback and, as managers, become mentors in your workplace. These are essential to building and sustaining an excellent performance culture. Work psychologist, Dr Gene Johnson, teaches you how to focus on a results-driven culture, how to build it and how to not get muddled up in the mechanics of the process.

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