

Performance Management Forum June 2 & 4, 2008

General Information

Two focus groups were recently held by DPA-DHR, open to all state employees to discuss performance management in its current state. There was open discussion about many topics, some of which were what's working; what's not working; and identifying solutions. There was discussion on what should be included in training; the perception of a forced distribution or quota system whereby only a certain percentage of employees are given an "exceptional," or the highest rating; unclear expectations as to how individuals may achieve the highest rating; the lack of distinction among all "successful" employees who actually reflect a wide range of performance; and lack of training to supervisors and to employees as to expectations and proper implementation of performance management.

Flip Chart Notes

WHAT'S WORKING:

- Defined competencies
- 3 ratings levels are easy to understand and apply
- We are not ready to say the current system doesn't work
- Fairly successful performance process

WHAT'S NOT WORKING:

- Forced distribution – a function of budget
- Feels like a quota system
- Allocation of funds
- Distribution of awards
- Communication to employees is not working
- 3-level rating not working
- 4-level rating did not work
- Relates to 'high school' rating scale (A, B, C)
- Tired of changes
- Training for supervisors
- Lack of specific definitions
- How to attain a level 3 needs to be defined for all employees
- Goal setting is not being done
- Calibration of the current rating system is not working
- Training – we need to go back to basics
- No credibility in the current system
- Performance management lacking
- Valid and reliable instrument does not exist
- Distorted ratings
- What are the differences in public versus private
- Inequity in apply the current system (colleges versus departments)

- How to exceed expectations on core competencies. Aren't these P/F?
- New employees paid differently (compensation related)
- Pay range levels are restrictive (compensation related)
- Morale and retention
- Moving from 4 to 3 ratings
- Range between level 1 and level 3 is too broad
- 3 levels are problematic (we are trained to see 5 levels with 360's and selection)
- Our supervisors do not understand how to apply the system
- It doesn't matter if it's qualitative or quantitative – employees are demanding that you color it black or white. If you can't quantify it, you cannot hold me to that standard
- Supervisors do not know how to measure
- The continuous change.
- The current system is not simple
- The process is time consuming (especially if you're going to do it well)
- The organizational structure does not allow this system to succeed.
- Supervisors have too many employees – not enough time to do this well.
- Current system is bad on employee morale.
- Performance management should either be tied to how well you are doing or to pay, but not both.
- Frustration with why did I work so hard if the bell curve is going to put us in the same range anyway.
- The separate dispute resolution process is hard for employees to understand and follow (i.e. not the same as the appeal process).
- Disciplinary or Correction Actions – if I have a bad employee what should I do, regarding the performance management record to demonstrate poor performance?

IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS:

- Take the money out of performance management
- 360 feedback to supervisors
- DPA institute a valid process (like selection)
- Training (calibration)
- One statewide automated tracking system (not CPPS). With supervisory access. From O.I.T.
- Ability to track and evaluate
- Requirement of performance management training component (core principles) every year. Perhaps like other required trainings of continuing education for supervisors.
- DPA go forth with intent to re-build (if necessary) and to make it stay – no further changes.
- Survey employees
- Focus group with employees
- Point system – don't separate by only one point (i.e. 98, 99). Always leave a gap between levels (e.g. 80-90; 95-105)

- Training supervisors on the value of performance management and understanding the exception level.
- Allow for different levels of “disagree”.
- Require a minimum of three meetings (ongoing feedback)
- Make supervisors deal with conflict – training on conflict resolution
- Hold supervisors accountable
- Implement a self evaluation (communication & dialogue)
- Keep employee actively engaged
- Succession planning
- Marketing performance management and pay
- Employee education/training that level 2 is successful (a mind set)
- Supervisor’s need to understand that they are the first line
- When peers understand; they train others
- Live by – no surprises
- Encourage different types of evaluation forms and methods for different job groups or type of work.
- Form a Performance Management Group of “gurus” to discuss and share information re: scoring, online evaluation process, staff development strategies, etc.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN TRAINING:

- Core trainings (pre-planning with employee’s, continuous feedback, creating measurable IPOs)
- Central trainer (i.e. DPA)
- Training provided by the statewide authority (DPA)
- Training for all supervisors
- Training for all employees
- Provide digital training (CD, video)
- There needs to be universal training on the basics
- Uniform statewide system
- Creating SMART goals
- Employee development – how to develop employees.
- Training on performance management concepts
- Generate electronic trainings (not necessarily sending out a person)
- Train-the-trainer, may not be enough
- Train supervisors on the tolls and resources
- DPA train HR (maybe supervisors)
- HR office will train their own managers and employees
- DPA train to ensure statewide consistency
- Communication on the state’s philosophy (like compensation)
- DPA positive communication prior to the start of the performance cycle – period check-ins.
- DPA provides information on what information does every employee need to know. The principles of performance management are the same.
- Coaching, feedback – how to.

- Emphasize rewards and incentives
- DPA provide some different samples of methods in the universal concepts training and tools.
- Fundamental overview of statute, rules and anything else standard among departments.
- How to include a 360 review for supervisors.
- How to measure competencies.
- How to develop competencies in staff.

Participant Comments/Discussions

In addition to the above, there was discussion and input that was not necessarily written on the flip charts.

Concerns were expressed about aspects of the way performance management is implemented. The nature of complaints regarding performance management was focused on the implementation of the process, rather than on the structure of the system itself.

For example, a supervisor who tells an employee that it is impossible to attain an exceptional rating is not implementing the system as it is designed, as all employees must be eligible to attain the highest rating if their performance justifies such a rating.

Similarly, telling an employee that he or she must “walk on water” to get an exceptional rating, or expressing to an employee who asks how to get an exceptional rating, “I can’t tell you what it looks like, but I know it when I see it” is not the way the performance management process is intended to be implemented.

Reports of supervisors telling employees that they would have been rated exceptional, “but the budget cannot support it,” indicates a serious lack of understanding of the expectations of those implementing performance management, specifically supervisors who are charged with conveying ratings to employees.

One item that is structural rather than pure implementation is the limitations inherent in a 3-rating system, specifically the inability to officially distinguish “high successful” employees from “low successful” coworkers.

Matters of concern expressed in the focus groups pertained to supervisors, managers, and leadership applying the system incorrectly.

DPA-DHR Preliminary Conclusions Reached

The sentiment of both focus groups was that performance management has been changed too much in recent years, and participants expressed a preference to work with the current system in order to give it time to take hold. There is a desire to go

forward with the performance management system that we currently have, including the 3-ratings levels. Participants are not ready to say the current system does not work.

Employees who attended these groups expressed a desire for centralized training from DPA in basic performance management, as well as specifics of how the state's process should be implemented (for example, calibration of ratings so that there is a common understanding of what "exceptional" means in this context).

Human resources professionals in attendance also expressed a desire to be able to enhance and tailor the training in order to present department-specific aspects such as forms available, time frames and due dates.

Many of the issues identified can be addressed in training conducted by DPA-DHR on the "core" performance management basics: how to do performance planning with employees, how to provide continuous coaching and feedback with employees, how to create measureable performance objectives. DPA-DHR needs to provide consistent training to Department HR Administrators (train-the-trainer) and/or supervisors. The consistency comes from providing universal training on the concepts and basics of performance management to ensure statewide consistency. Some Department HR Administrators prefer to train their own internal supervisors on details of their individual performance programs.