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Inclusive Performance Management

In the Community Service sector

Performance management is an ongoing process where managers and employees regularly communicate to assess and review an employee’s role responsibilities, expectations, performance, and strategies for development. Community service sector employees often find themselves in this industry with the ambition of making a difference, so effective performance management processes will help them perform at their best and ensure that their performance contributes to the organisation meeting its strategic goals.

[The [Australian Public Service Commission](https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/information-aps-employment/performance/performance-management-australian-public-service)](https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/information-aps-employment/performance/performance-management-australian-public-service) states that by regularly engaging with employees to understand their successes, unpacking their strengths and challenges, and providing professional development opportunities, organisations can improve both an employee’s capability and the quality of service delivered. Active performance management will develop a sustainable, and high-performing team. This guide is targeted to leaders and managers to support them to manage the performance of employees in an inclusive way.

**Inclusive leadership traits**

For performance management processes to be effective, managers and leaders must demonstrate inclusive leadership traits. There are six behaviours that demonstrate inclusive leadership:

1. **Visible commitment:** Managers and leaders articulate an authentic commitment to diversity, challenge the status quo, hold others accountable and make diversity and inclusion a personal priority.
2. **Humility:** They are modest about capabilities, admit mistakes, and create the space for others to contribute.
3. **Awareness of bias:** They show awareness of personal blind spots as well as flaws in the system and work hard to ensure meritocracy.
4. **Curiosity about others:** They demonstrate an open mindset and deep curiosity about others. They listen without judgment, and seek with empathy to understand those around them.
5. **Cultural intelligence**: They are attentive to others’ cultures and adapt as required.
6. **Effective collaboration**: They empower others, pay attention to diversity of thinking and psychological safety, and focus on team cohesion.

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Description automatically generated**The BRAVING Framework by Brené Brown**

The BRAVING framework, developed by Brené Brown, outlines the key elements that constitute and build trust. It’s important for managers and leaders to invest time and effort into building trust with their teams, as this creates an environment where employees feel safe, supported and respected. This is critical for effective performance management to occur. The BRAVING framework is an acronym for seven components: Boundaries, Reliability, Accountability, Vault, Integrity, Non-Judgment, and Generosity.

* **Boundaries**: Respecting and being clear about your own boundaries and the boundaries of others.
* **Reliability**: Doing what you say you will do consistently.
* **Accountability**: Owning your mistakes, apologising, and making amends.
* **Vault**: Keeping private information confidential and not sharing information that is not yours to share.
* **Integrity:** Choosing courage over comfort, practicing your values, and doing what is right rather than what is easy or fast.
* **Non-Judgment:** Offering and asking for help without judgment.
* **Generosity:** Extending the most generous interpretation to the intentions, words, and actions of others.

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Description automatically generatedIncorporating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) into the performance management framework**

We all carry biases, and every interaction we have in the workplace is an opportunity for bias to creep in, or for us to consciously create a more inclusive culture. Embedding DEIB principles and practices into all aspects of your organisation will support managers and leaders to approach performance management in an inclusive way. Consider implementing the following DEIB activities into your organisation so that managers and leaders are supported to provide effective performance management to a diverse range of employees:

**Assessment and goal setting:**

* Conduct DEIB Audits: Assess the current state of DEIB within the organisation across the following areas:
  + staff and stakeholders (measure the breadth of diverse talent in your leadership team, employee base, service user base and in the labour market pool)
  + employment policies and practices
  + recruitment
  + remuneration and reward
  + inclusion
  + learning and development
* Set Clear DEIB Goals: Establish specific, measurable DEIB goals for managers and leaders.

**Training and development:**

* Provide comprehensive DEIB training for leaders and managers: Include modules on vulnerability, trust-building, and resilience. DEIB training raises awareness among leaders and managers about the importance of fostering an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and promotes fairness. It helps individuals recognise unconscious biases, educates them on cultural competence, and equips them with the tools to be an upstander and challenge discrimination.
* Ongoing education: Ensure continuous learning opportunities related to DEIB.

**Monitoring and feedback**

* Regular check-Ins: Schedule regular check-ins to discuss DEIB progress and challenges. It’s not uncommon in a busy, service-delivery sector, for supervision meetings to be cancelled or moved when other priorities that are time-bound and critical come up. What’s important is ensuring that these meetings are rescheduled and that strategies are in place to ensure they do happen regularly, even when it’s difficult to make the time. In the long run, maintaining regular, effective supervision saves everyone time.

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Description automatically generated**Performance management tool: Bias checklist for leaders and managers**

This tool will support managers to recognise and mitigate biases during performance management. Each section of the table includes a checklist to ensure fair and objective evaluations of an employee’s performance.

You can use this table to track your evaluation process in your own organisation, adding notes where appropriate to support the process. By utilising this tool, managers can feel supported to conduct more fair and objective performance evaluations, fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace for their employees.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Bias Type** | **Checklist Questions** | **Yes / No** | **Notes** |
| **Affinity Bias** (the tendency to favour people who share similar interests, backgrounds, and experiences with us) | Is this person from a similar background to me?  (Consider socio-economic, schools, social circles as well as race and ethnicity) |  |  |
| How is that influencing my perspective of them? |  |  |
| Are their strengths similar/different to mine? |  |  |
| Are the qualities I identify and am using to make my judgement subjective personality traits? |  |  |
| Do I have more concrete evidenced examples that I can use that are objective? |  |  |
| What are some specific tasks that actually demonstrate these traits? (time and place examples would be good for objectivity) |  |  |
| Describe their achievement in terms of actions and behaviours. |  |  |
| Am I comparing them to another colleague I am closer to personally? |  |  |
| **Halo Effect** (when your overall impression of a person impacts your evaluations ofthat person’s specific traits) | Is there one quality that I admire in this individual? |  |  |
| What essential functions does this skill/competency impact day to day within the business?  Can I give a practical example? |  |  |
| A white background with black dots  Description automatically generatedAre there other areas the employee has neglected because of their focus on this area? |  |  |
| Look at the example of success/room for improvement on performance feedback you have written down. |  |  |
| Has another employee acted in a similar way? |  |  |
| Do your ratings reflect this similarity? |  |  |
| **Horns Effect** (when you judge someone negatively based on one trait) | Have I ever felt let down by this employee?  When did this happen? |  |  |
| Was this linked to a pattern of behaviour or a single event? |  |  |
| What areas of competency does this event impact? |  |  |
| Can I look at other areas of competency independently of this? |  |  |
| In the last 3 weeks, what has their output been? |  |  |
| Are there any tasks they performed particularly well in? Why? |  |  |
| **Attribution Bias** (the systematic errors made when people evaluate or try to find reasons for their own and others’ behaviours) | This person is underperforming in one area. Have other employees struggled to perform in this area too? |  |  |
| Are there any structural issues that may impact on this area? For example, a lack of resources, technology, or a lack of personnel? |  |  |
| **Confirmation Bias** (the tendency to favour information that confirms existing beliefs or values) | Ensure you take a holistic approach – weighing up a range of competencies. |  |  |
| Wherever you make assertions, weigh up both strengths and weaknesses. Clarify the nuances. |  |  |
| Write down an achievement/performance indicator from 6 months ago, 3 months, 1 month ago, and this week. What assumptions are challenged by this timescale? |  |  |
| **Contrast Effect** (a cognitive bias that distorts our perception of something when we compare it to something else, by enhancing the differences between the things being compared) | Take breaks when writing performance reviews. |  |  |
| What differentiated strengths does this employee bring? |  |  |
| Ground assessment in evidenced examples. |  |  |
| Where you find yourself comparing, note down why. Are you measuring this employee on skills and tasks outside of their job description? |  |  |

**Additional resources**

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  Description automatically generated[Individual Performance Plan and Review template](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.qcoss.org.au%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F01%2FIndividual-Performance-Plan-and-Review-Template.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)