



presents

# do i need to thank my manager?

*we need better managers, not better reviewers*

What if the purpose of your performance management system was to create better managers, not better reviewers...?

Managing effectively requires experience, maturity, responsibility. Most of these can be coached, or learned, but there aren't a whole lot of tools out there to help you manage your people.

*Hannibal kept his team humming by giving everyone a go on the elephants, but you probably don't have that option...*

So why are traditional reviews so bad, and how can you fix performance reviews to actually **improve** management practice? We have four tips for you - read on!



## differential management

Different people need to be managed differently; some actually like to be micromanaged, while others work better left to their own devices.

Some will be poor performers, and they'll have performance problems that need to be dealt with.

Others will be great performers, and they most likely won't have any problems that need your attention. So why go digging for them?

Just because your review form asks you to list x 'opportunities for development', doesn't mean you can, will or should try to find problems for each employee

*less than ideal management practice*

### Introduce 12 year old Tiger Woods to Ed, a typical manager.

There's a chance that Ed would recognize the boy's potential and help make him the greatest golfer in the world, but it's more likely he'd be fixated on improving Tiger's swimming.

(Of course it seems Tiger could have used some important life lessons as well.)

## performance reviews mess things up

Say you have a team of 10. You've identified serious performance issues for 2 of them, 2 are stars, the rest are comfortably average. Who are you going to pay most attention to and spend most time with? Probably the underperformers (you want them to improve, right?) And the star performers are just so capable they can take care of themselves. Can't they...?



It might work out. But it's more likely the underperformers are going to respond to the attention and the stars are going to look elsewhere for their challenges and career development. Not ideal!

If your focus is on finding and fixing staff with 'problems', do you have any energy left to manage the good guys effectively?

Reviews shouldn't force managers to look for problems that aren't there, should allow them to 'stretch' high performers, and should enable them to focus on making teams work.

**frankly, if your subjects aren't made of the right stuff, not even the most ardent, fervent, dedicated and well-meaning managing will get results..**



## performance reviews should complement day to day management, not replace it.

Performance feedback should be continual, not saved up and delivered once a year. For a start, it's really hard trying to cram a year's worth of feedback into an hour. Plus outdated feedback is useful to nobody - don't tell me now what I did wrong 6 months ago!

Management needs to be **every day**: regular feedback, monitoring and measuring. Yearly reviews can be seen as a replacement for this ongoing communication. Which is bad.

# this isn't the time to be dumbing things down

## find the balance

help managers  
manage successfully  
year-round



minimize messes &  
muck-ups at review  
time

Many HR systems are created for the lowest common denominator (the 'least capable' manager), but performance management should be challenging managers to get the most from their teams rather than meeting basic reporting requirements. **Great managers** are highly intuitive: they already know instinctively who needs watching, who can be left alone, and how to get the whole team working like a well-oiled machine... Your performance reviews need to not only help the less capable managers tick the boxes, but should also guide your great managers without disregarding (or marginalizing!) their super managerial powers.

Face it: filling out review forms is boring and time consuming, but not difficult. How hard is it to tick boxes once a year? On the other hand, managing people is fairly tricky. Sure, you can tick 'em, but usually there's a lot more to (effective) management than that.



## the 4 tips for being better managers, not better reviewers

**1** Annual reviews should summarize feedback and conversations from throughout the year, not bring up anything new (or worse! surprises! unless they involve cake...)

**2** Not all employees will have performance problems: it's ok to help good employees get even better without having anything to 'fix'

**3** Spend energy on your stars if you want them to hang around (yes, even more energy than you spend on your underperformers)

**4** Don't try to fit employees into those neat, well-defined boxes you're so used to seeing on review forms.\* Management is messy, complicated business: roll with it!

\* If you're a magician, feel free to fit your employees into boxes. They like it.