

Managing Poor Performers in your Organisation!



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- **Specialists in Leadership, People and Organisational Development**
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- **Highly Commended Award for Organisational Effectiveness**

Pure Magic's Fiji Clients include The Reserve Bank of Fiji, The University of the South Pacific, Air Terminal Services (Fiji) and The Sofitel Resort and Spa

Ask any Manager what they do with non-performers in their team or organisation, and the responses will be varied.

Some will terminate the employment, whilst others will try and encourage the person to perform more effectively in their roles. Others (at great cost to the organisation and other team members) will simply move them from department to department, hoping the problem will 'go away.'

This 'shifting of the problem' resolves nothing – it just creates problems for other parts of the Company.



What is poor or under-performance?

According to FairWork, under-performance is:

- Unsatisfactory work performance – a failure to perform the duties of the position or to the standard required
- Non-compliance with workplace policies, rules or procedures
- Unacceptable workplace behavior
- Disruptive or negative behavior that impacts co-workers

Underperformance is not the same as misconduct. Misconduct is a serious behavior (such as theft or assault) that may warrant instant dismissal. In cases of misconduct, employers should seek specific advice about how to proceed before they take any action (Source: FairWork)

Dealing with poor performance - A reality of Leadership

Many Leaders are hesitant or unsure what to do about non-performers, whilst others dread the ultimate 'you have to pull your socks up' discussion. In reality, addressing poor performance is one small aspect of leadership and should be seen as a simple and pain-free task.

When poor performance goes unaddressed for long periods of time, as too often it does, it can become a major problem and manifest itself into a situation that can blow out of control.

3 Steps to address poor performance

According to The Fortune Group, there are 3 steps to address poor performance:

1. Identify what behaviour is causing the employee to underperform

Don't assume the person is disinterested, incompetent or demotivated. There are many reasons why an individual or team is under-performing and the role of the Leader is to ascertain the reasons behind the non-performance. Could it be a health issue? Are they going through a difficult personal situation such as a separation or death of a loved one? Are they simply not in a role that 'lights their fire'? Does the person know exactly what is required of them? Interpersonal differences? Does the organisation have a robust Performance Appraisal system to assess competencies and successful completion of tasks in each role?

2. Confront their poor performance

There are various rules when confronting poor performance, such as:

Be emotionally intelligent during the discussion. Never criticise or insult the individual in anger or be demeaning to them as a person. Stay calm and in control.

Have the discussion as soon as possible. The longer you leave it, the more the individual feels that their lack of performance (if they are aware of it) is condoned.

Be specific about your observations. For example, say 'I have noticed that you arrive at work late on three mornings each week – Monday, Tuesday and Friday.' Don't say 'You often come late.'

Have the conversation in private. It is never okay to have performance review discussions in front of others (unless it involves them as well). Always have discussions about performance and competence one on one.

Support your comments with data. Explain what they are not doing well, and use numbers and examples to support your point. For example, say 'you only achieved 46% efficiencies on your machine this week' as opposed to 'you don't seem to get the efficiencies you should.'

Explain the impact of their lack of performance on others. When a person or team under-performs, it means others have to 'pick up the slack.' During the discussion, explain that because they are late, other people have to stay back to wait for them, which impacts their family life, for example.

3. Redirect their behaviour to improve performance

What do you think will work? Once you have started talking about the issue with the individual, ask them what they think would work to help them improve? How do they believe they can improve their performance? Encourage them to be accountable for their actions and work ethic.

Supervision/Coaching/Mentoring: Any of these strategies can assist an under-performing individual or team to grow to greater competence heights.

Additional educational development: Would a specific course or development programme help them grow?

Cross functional experience: Would giving them an opportunity to work in another area be of assistance to both the person and the organisation?

Individual competence plans. What plans can be put in place to help this person become more effective in their role?

Praise them when they do well

Other pastures. Inevitably some employees will not meet the needs of the organisation, even though they have been helped to improve performance. Taking into account regulatory requirements, policies of the organisation and a collective agreement if applicable, it may be time to review their employment and consider the next step.

The importance of having a robust and effective Performance Appraisal System

Many organisations have effective, structured performance appraisal systems, where people are assessed each year (sometimes more often) on their performance against specific key performance indicators in their role.

However, a significant number of organisations don't regularly review the performance of their people (leaders and staff), often leading to low performance and a lack of acceptable organizational growth over time.

In my December article I wrote about the critical importance of having a Vision to guide employees and leaders alike – to help them know what the roadmap is and to devise goals to achieve it.

Similarly, if you don't have a robust performance appraisal system, how would your people (or the organisation) know whether they are achieving their objectives and reaching the organisation's Vision?

Clear Position Descriptions (what the job does), Key Result Areas (Key tasks in the role) and Key Performance Measurement Indicators (assessment criteria against specific goals) are critical if an organization is going to achieve its business objectives and ensure all goals are met by everybody in the Company.

Nine reasons why you need a robust and effective performance appraisal process

- To track organisational progress
- To assess what tasks are being completed and the state of relationships within teams, departments and the organisation overall
- To grow your people
- To ascertain where skills may be lacking
- To enable the Leader to put development strategies in place for their people in order to improve competencies and capabilities where necessary
- To identify gaps that may occur in organisational strategies due to incompetence or a missing skill set
- To encourage staff to strive for greater competence and career development opportunities
- To identify star performers
- To identify poor performers

Conclusion

There are many reasons why people in organisations under-perform. Sometimes it is an organisational issue (the position description is unclear or goals are not concise) and on other occasions, it is the individual's issue (lack of skills, competencies or compliance to Company policies and procedures, for example).

Managing poor performance is a key role of Leadership and must be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Questions: Do you have a question about your team or business. Write to us at info@puremagictraining.com.au. We will gladly answer it.