Performance Management

Considerations for performance management and best practices and methods to solicit feedback for managers.

6

What's Included in this Section?

1 **Performance Management Considerations**
A discussion of common employee concerns about performance management during remote work and considerations for how to potentially adjust performance management in a flexible work environment

2 **Best Practices for Performance Management**
Guidance on how to balance performance management for a hybrid team (e.g., across on-site and remote employees) and tips for managers on how to incorporate them within their team

3 **Guidance on Sharing Performance Management Practices with Team**
Suggested steps to share performance management processes with a team, and ensure managers are prepared to incorporate feedback and adjust plans as-needed moving forward

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Recognize Recent Performance Management Concerns

If your team decides to transition to a hybrid or remote work model moving forward, consider the following common employee concerns.

Comments from the 2021 MIT Work Succeeding Admin and Staff Survey

"I worry that leaving performance management up to a manager that doesn't agree with work from home (even pre-pandemic and even though we are getting more done now than before) leaves for some unfair practices."

"…there is a large amount of inequity in our office regarding privileges – some teams and directors seem to get unlimited freedom, while others are treated less equitably."

Note: *66% of survey respondents* ***strongly agree that their supervisor fairly judges what they contribute*** *to their team in a remote environment (19% somewhat agree)*

Performance management concerns in a remote or hybrid workplace:

Lack of qualitative feedback: In a hybrid or fully remote environment, there is a chance that managers will have less visibility into the daily activities of their employees.

Ensuring fairness: In a hybrid environment, employees may worry that – by not being physically in the presence of their manager – they may be at a disadvantage compared to their on-campus team members.

Virtual performance reviews: When conducting virtual performance reviews, managers have less of an ability to gauge body language. Managers must adapt to being patient and strong listeners in virtual performance review settings.

Equitable performance management practices: Review your performance management practices to ensure that they recognize and support your hybrid or remote work model. Update practices to ensure that all employees receive the guidance and feedback needed to be effective, regardless of work location.

Source: https://hbr.org/2020/06/how-to-do-performance-reviews-remotely

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Consider Performance Management Questions

Think through the following questions as you consider performance management practices in a flexible work environment.

Traditional performance management assumes that managers are in the same location as those that they managed. As managers consider flexible ways of working for their teams, they need to re-consider how to **accurately and fairly evaluate** the contributions that team members make **regardless of their work location.**
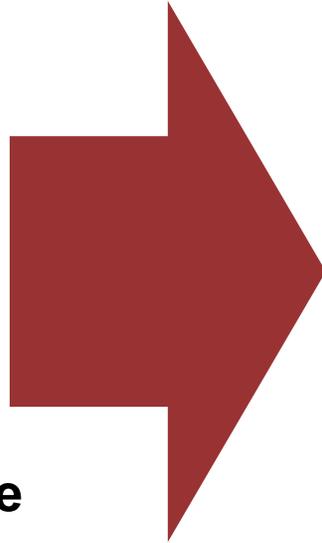
Questions to Consider:

- What is the current culture of performance management on my team?

- Do my direct reports have a clear understanding of how they are evaluated in various work models (e.g., on-site, hybrid, or remote)?

- In what ways do my team's current performance management process ensure fairness?

- What adjustments need to be made to ensure fairness across all work models?

- How do I measure success for my team members? Does that definition of success assume physical proximity between myself and the team?

Understand the Balance of Performance Management for Flexible Teams

You may need to evolve traditional performance management for hybrid and remote teams.

✕ Avoid measuring only:

Activities. Activities are the actions taken to produce results. Although it is easier to see the activities that in-person employees are performing, *remote tasks are just as important to mission success.* Don't forget to recognize and thank your employees for their work whether you can see the effort that went in or not.

Labor Hours. Labor hours are the measure of time spent at a desk. Productivity and performance are *not* driven by an employee's physical presence during work hours, but by the output created during their time working. Whether employees are in the office, at home, or elsewhere, taking breaks and establishing work-life balance should be encouraged.

✓ Strive to measure holistically:

Accomplishments. Accomplishments are the products of employee activities or tasks. While activities are described as verbs (e.g., writing, filing, scheduling), accomplishments are described as adjectives and nouns – *timely* reports, *reliable* data, *exceptional* customer service, *proactive* solution development. Aim to measure employee performance by what was achieved.

Outcomes. Outcomes are the final results of an organization or team's work. Individuals and teams should also be measured by their ability to make progress towards outcomes over time through hard work and innovation, such as enhancing process efficiency, improving client satisfaction, reducing costs, etc.

Factors to balance

Skills-Based
The core competencies or skills necessary to successfully operate on a day-to-day basis

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Results-Based
The indicators to measure progress based on outputs, outcomes, and impact

Qualitative
A variable, abstract, and typically more open-ended form of measurement

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Quantitative
A data-driven, numerical, or statistical form of measurement

Objectivity
Impartial and concrete measurement without bias or prejudice

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Fairness
Fair judgement of performance with acknowledgement of for the various struggles an employee may be facing

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Incorporate Performance Management Best Practices

As you conduct performance reviews, consider incorporating the following tips and tricks to enable the best outcomes.

Consider new ways of gathering performance feedback

- Measure outcomes instead of only activities
- Encourage staff to reflect and evaluate themselves[1]
- Invite feedback on how you are doing as a manager to support the employee's performance and development.

Display patience and empathy

- Create space for team members to share their experience
- Refrain from interrupting and discrediting

Focus on being an active listener

- Practice eye contact and positive body language on camera
- Take notes to help you remember key feedback points

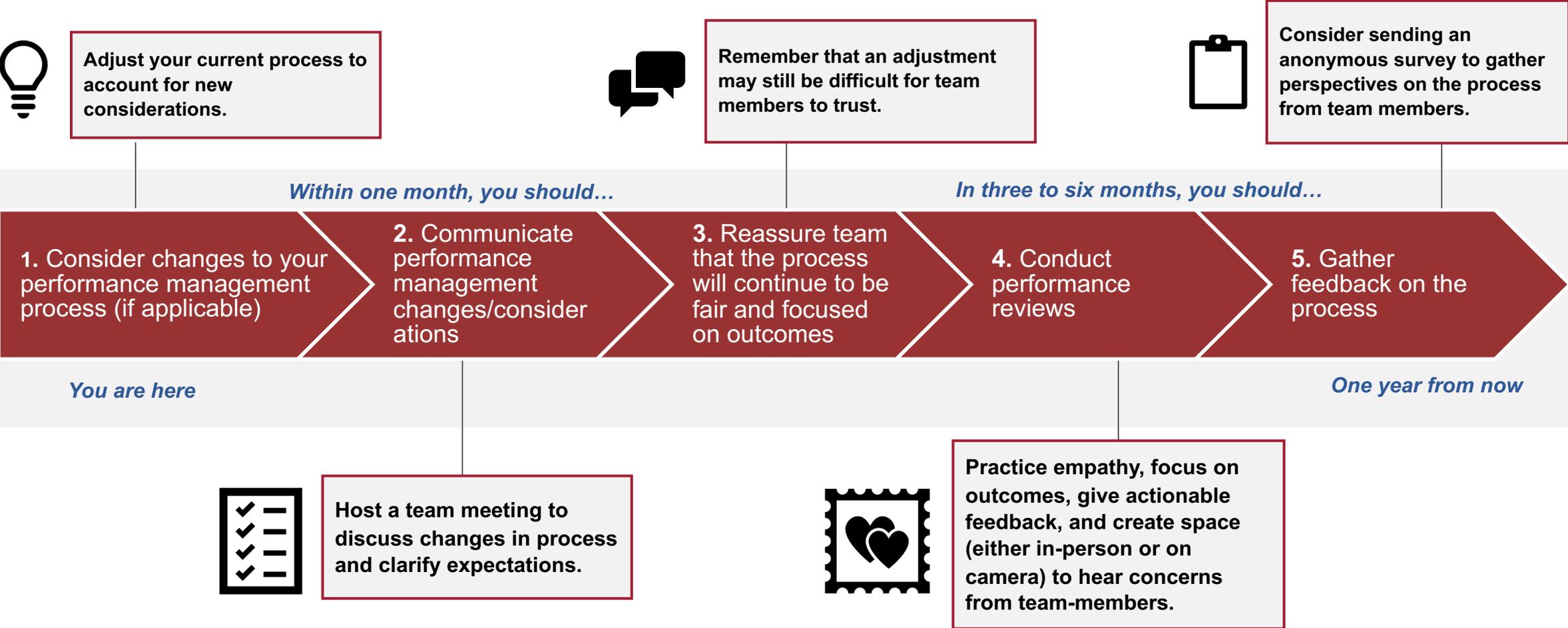## Deliver feedback purposefully and consistently

- Provide performance feedback on a monthly basis at a minimum
- Ensure feedback is actionable for staff to incorporate moving forward

Managers must be cognizant of cultural, gender, and any other factors that may act as implicit biases when evaluating the self-promotion efforts of employees. Ensure you are practicing consistency and fairness across all team members.

Share Your Performance Management Process With Your Team

Once you have thought through the key differences and considerations of your performance management process, ensure your team has a clear understanding.

Adjust your current process to account for new considerations.

Remember that an adjustment may still be difficult for team members to trust.

Consider sending an anonymous survey to gather perspectives on the process from team members.

Within one month, you should…

In three to six months, you should…

1. Consider changes to your performance management process (if applicable)

2. Communicate performance management changes/considerations

3. Reassure team that the process will continue to be fair and focused on outcomes

4. Conduct performance reviews

5. Gather feedback on the process

You are here

One year from now

Host a team meeting to discuss changes in process and clarify expectations.

Practice empathy, focus on outcomes, give actionable feedback, and create space (either in-person or on camera) to hear concerns from team-members.

Gather Feedback from Your Team

Once you have conducted performance reviews, solicit feedback from your team to improve the process.

Sample Questions to Gather Feedback on the Performance Management Process:

- Do you feel that the performance management process was clearly explained?

- Did you have a strong understanding of your performance expectations and how you will be evaluated?

- Did you feel comfortable asking for feedback to improve your performance?

- If anything, what would make the performance management process more equitable moving forward?

- As the manager, what might you continue doing or do differently to improve the process, outcomes and experience for your employees?

- [Depending on the work model] Over the performance review period, did you feel that all team members were evaluated equally regardless of their working arrangement (e.g., on-site, hybrid, and remote)?