

# Organizations need to get feedback right, too

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How do you improve management feedback so employees can build skills and perform at their best? Given the challenges attracting and retaining talent, this question is far more important than it was a few years ago.

Many companies — up to 70 percent, by one estimate — have eliminated or are considering eliminating formal reviews in favor of more frequent, informal feedback conversations. Yet, feedback often doesn't have the impact on performance or employee development we're led to believe. Many managers are unskilled in the art of providing helpful feedback, and employees look elsewhere for development, while motivation and engagement dwindles.

## **Disconnection**

The solution seems obvious: Train managers to deliver feedback better. The problem lies in the disconnect between what we expect of managers and what we hold them accountable for, and further, what they receive feedback on. If managers are to master feedback, organizations must become engaged with thoughtful, well-rounded systems to help them succeed.

## **Case study**

A *Fortune 500* mining company implemented exactly such a system to improve performance at one of its largest production facilities while maintaining strong safety and equipment reliability performance. This happened, however, during a period of immense workforce turnover. Rather than relying on standard management training, the company adopted an organizational framework for conducting performance conversations across the entire organization.

It was quickly apparent that management viewed their role in employee development in different ways, some perceptions more accurate than others. The first step involved clarifying precisely who needed to do what differently and when. This resulted in specifying five, high-level leadership dialogue behaviors across the organization.

Second, the framework articulated clear goals or outcomes for these conversations rather than tactical instruction on how to conduct them. For instance, for touchpoints, the goal was to get to know the other person; for one-on-ones, employees were to drive the conversation.

Finally, the framework included a measurement system that asked employees (and managers) to provide regular, anonymous feedback (both quantitative and qualitative) on how well their managers were doing on both the leadership dialogue behaviors and the

system's goals. Feedback was specifically tied to each expectation.

Implementing a robust system for dialogue paid off. Within a year, the company self-admittedly transformed its culture, which in turn allowed it to realize a 50 percent jump in productivity.

This company initially targeted productivity and safety, but mobilizing the entire organization to improve dialogue can yield a range of benefits, including more innovation and higher employee engagement. The workplace becomes what it's supposed to be: A dynamic and inspiring place where people at all levels can contribute and feel empowered to succeed.

To push your company to higher levels of success, by all means, go beyond old-fashioned performance review practices. But then take a step further: Mobilize the entire organization to get feedback right. You'll be glad you did.

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