Workplace Management: Performance is a Deliverable – 14231

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ABSTRACT

Traditional management curriculum tells us that management is "coordinating the efforts of people to accomplish desired goals using available resources efficiently and effectively." We overlook that key word "coordinating" in our haste to focus on people, goals, and resources. A new approach to performance management emphasizes deliverables, productive communication, and performance agreements. The starting point is relocating performance away from *doing* to viewing performance as the products, services, and communications that are *delivered* from one person or group to another. Performance as deliverables can be measured in three distinct locations; none of them is inside a group of people.

In this new model of management, deliverables are the basic unit of performance; productive conversations are the basic unit of management; and agreements for deliverables are the basic engine of performance management. These three principles are moving us away from the socio-technical view of work groups linked by their "shared values, human behaviors, and informal social and personal relationships" and toward the importance of the deliverables that move between them. It is now possible to get back to business and focus on giving people an opportunity to accomplish something instead of putting their attitudes and feelings as the highest priority.

INTRODUCTION

Managers have noticed the challenge of coordination in our increasingly complex workplaces. External regulations, resource requirements, and user-customer involvement in many new ways makes it difficult to keep people focused. Just as organizations have structures, so performance management has structures for operating in a networked environment of teams, silos, suppliers and customers. Five coordination tools are outlined to support managers and teams in keeping attention on productive relationships and communications.

This paper supports managing the moving parts by managing their connections: the agreements between groups for the deliverable products, services, and communications that need to be exchanged in order for higher-level goals to be accomplished. Thinking outside the boxes on the organization chart will put attention on the relationships and the need to clarify what each player wants and needs from the other. Managing these agreements using productive communication and coordination structures gives managers direct access to performance improvements at all levels.

MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

The aim of management is to improve performance. A list compiled from discussions with managers over the past decade (1) shows ten distinct kinds of work where most organizations want to see performance management. Listed alphabetically, with examples of each, they are:

1. Financial (cash flow, profit & loss, ROI) and/or Accounting (budgets, income, expenses)
2. Human resources (hiring, firing, compensation, discipline, performance reviews)

3. Information technology (managing databases, operating systems, reporting functions)
4. Legal (handling contracts and negotiations)
5. Marketing (product innovation, media, merchandising, market share)
6. Operations (production, safety, compliance)
7. Quality (quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement)
8. Sales (sales prospecting, product promotions, forecasting)
9. Strategy (strategic planning for risk, safety, revenue, resource allocation)
10. Training and developing people (improving skill sets, supporting career paths)

The immediate task is to be clear about what we mean by both management and performance. We can then move on to the how-to's of practicing performance management to gain improvements.

Management

One traditional definition of management is "coordinating the efforts of people to accomplish desired goals using available resources efficiently and effectively."   So it's natural that managers and management coaches and trainers tend to focus on people, goals, and resources. Those three elements are so familiar to us that we skip over the more mysterious idea of "coordinating" and go directly to what we know. That's also why all of our organizations include departments that are responsible for each of the three familiar ingredients, e.g., human resources, strategic planning, and finance-budget offices.   Other definitions of management pose the same problem, listing components such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling a group or organization. We have the elements, but not the how-to's, and only vague ideas about coordination.

In each case, the goal of management is to improve performance, where performance means that we produce or provide something that is valued by others.   But focusing on people, goals, and resources, for example, is obviously not enough to give us the performance we want from management. The high proportion of plans and projects that go over budget, come in late, or are abandoned due to unexpected circumstances reveal the limitations of our segmented, uncoordinated approach to management.

The recipe for improving organization performance needs more than a list of ingredients. It needs a set of instructions for how to make something from those ingredients, i.e., how to "coordinate" people, goals, and resources in a way that will accomplish something.   Starting with the dictionary doesn't help much, as it says only that "coordinate" = "co" (with) + "ordinare" (order). So, we coordinate "with order", but what kind of order? Do we try to create interpersonal harmony and trust? Encourage leadership and followership? Add more rules, regulations, and oversight?

The Structures of Organization

Organization structures give us a way to understand the organization as a whole, and see many of the moving parts that need to be coordinated.   We can visualize an organization's structure and functions in two ways: as a hierarchy of authority and as a network of deliverables. While both models create a sense of order that supports people in working together, they offer different approaches to "coordinating the efforts of people" for the accomplishment of organizational goals.

The hierarchy of authority can be seen in the standard organization chart (see Diagram 1). It is a visually understandable display of the rankings of authority (horizontal rows) and the "silos" of functions (vertical columns).

Diagram 1. Hierarchical Organization Chart
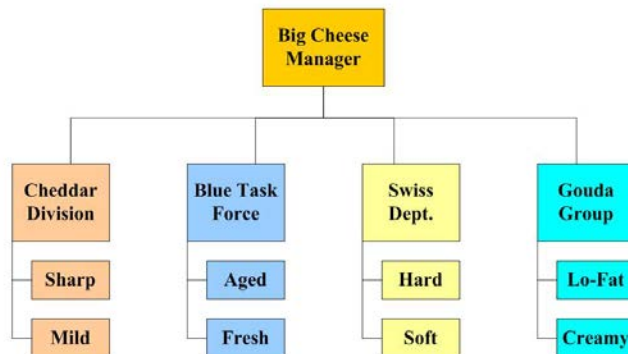
The boxes in the organization chart represent groups of people and their work processes, resources, and results. These groups are presumably busily working in their functional groups and subgroups producing various products, services, and communications for one another and/or for organization outsiders. The connections between the groups – the lines – represent authority relationships, and, also presumably, the communications between them. For example, the lines might represent the delivery of job instructions (going downward) and the return delivery of results-reports (going upward).

A network of deliverables recasts the organization chart as a network diagram. The boxes still represent groups and sub-groups of people doing work and producing results, but the up-down lines of authority are replaced by arrows indicating where each group's results are going when they are delivered to others inside and outside of the organization. The arrows represent agreed-upon "deliverables", i.e., products, services, and communications, which move from the producer-senders to the receivers, or user-customers (see diagram 2).

Diagram 2. Organization Network of Deliverables
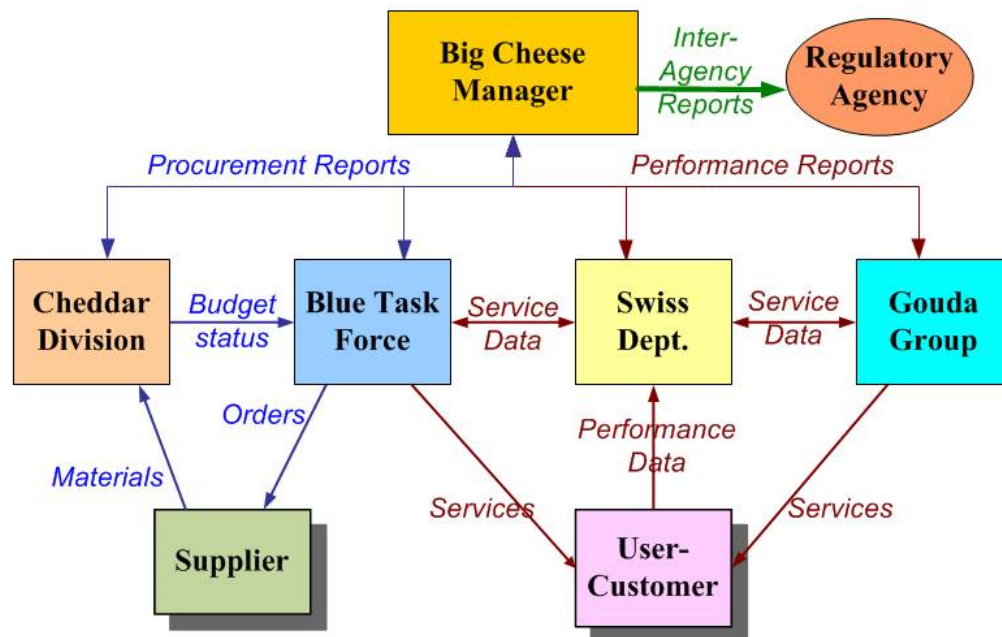
This simple shift in the meaning of the lines – from authority relations to group inputs and outputs –redefines the ideas of both performance and coordination.   It relocates performance from the work done inside the boxes, which requires tracking tasks, time, and other hard-to-see variables, to the more visible outputs and inputs associated with each box. Performance is measurable in the results delivered from one place to another: no deliverable, no performance.

The Challenge of Coordination: What Are We Managing?

Aside from the fact that people do not welcome being managed, the problem with managing "boxes" is that there is no obvious way to coordinate people's efforts to accomplish goals. The handiest toolkit might be the "organizational development" tools that focus on people foremost, for example to increase interpersonal trust, satisfaction, and conflict resolution among employees. Other benefits may include "self-managing teams" (2) of employees who will:

1. Assume more responsibility for the outcomes of their work;
2. Help members of their work group and employees in other groups to improve job performance and raise productivity;
3. Monitor their own performance and seek feedback on how well they are accomplishing their goals;
4. Manage their performance, taking corrective action when necessary to improve their work and the performance of other group members; and

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5. Seek guidance, assistance, and resources from the organization when they do not have what they need to do the job.

But this leaves unsaid which individual or department will be responsible to determine, communicate, and implement decisions regarding each of those benefits. Who decides, for example:

1. Which specific outcomes need to be produced by a group in order to best achieve overarching organizational goals?
2. What measures of performance and productivity will coordinate all levels in the organization?
3. What levels of performance require corrective action, and who sets the timetable for correction?
4. How is it determined who gets "guidance, assistance, and resources" when there are multiple groups in need?
5. Finally, when, how, and why should any internal group be in communication with other groups, internal or external to reach goals that require coordination across multiple teams, departments, or geographically separate branches?

If management is "coordinating people's efforts to accomplish desired goals", and we lack reliable access to coordination between groups to accomplish organization-level goals, then it could be said we are not managing at all. We must account for the situation in which goals and the resources to reach them are neither generated nor deployed solely inside a single organizational unit.

When we move performance outside the box, and locate it on the arrows of delivery between senders and receivers, we can coordinate the results themselves rather than the people, activity, and resources that produce them.   Performance management becomes a set of tools and practices that address the details of:

- Input and output results specified as sender-receiver agreed-upon deliverables;
- Measures of success agreed between senders and receivers;
- Resource requests made as deliverable communications between groups;
- Determining inter-group communication needs as a function of relationships needed to achieve both group and organizational goals.

The tools, described in the "Coordination Toolkit" section at the end of this paper, can be used to develop a set of performance management practices that deploy productive communication rather than attempting to manage people at work. This approach has been demonstrated successfully by executives and managers in government, industry, and service organizations (3).

PERFORMANCE AS DELIVERABLES

Nuclear power plants in the United States have   improved their performance steadily since 1997. In 2007 (VG), according to industry data, record-level performance was measured as:

1. Production cost per kilowatt hour (1.68 cents)
2. Level of electricity production
3. Nuclear electricity generation's offset of carbon dioxide emissions

All three of these types of performance are actually deliverables, produced by one organization or group and delivered or communicated to another. The performance is located on the arrows

between sender and receiver.   Furthermore, feedback that has helped maintain and improve industry results has been at the heart of the performance improvement process. This feedback, itself a deliverable (communication) between groups, consists of the corrective action process augmented by self-assessment, management observation processes, and other feedback types of communication (4).

Deliverables: The Basic Units of Performance

The network of products, services, and communications that move between groups in an organization constitute the performance of the organization as a whole.   Performance as deliverables is coordinated by the fact that deliverables are established by agreements between senders and receivers. Each sender is coordinating its work through "deliverable agreements" with multiple other senders and receivers – no single group or department can simply "do its own thing"; nor, with attention on deliverable agreements, can any group simply bypass other key players who need to be involved in reaching their goals. This interconnectivity, given by the deliverables and the agreements for their attributes and timing, establishes a reliable method for ensuring that everyone is synchronizing with everyone else either directly or indirectly.

Performance as deliverables can be measured in three distinct locations in the network of deliverables, none of which is located inside a group of people. This gives us three distinct types of deliverable performance:

1. Efficiency-Productivity – measured by taking the ratio of a group's "inputs" to "outputs", i.e., the types and values of some or all of the resources coming into the group and the types and value of some or all of the resulting outputs.
2. Quantity-Quality – measured by the outputs against specific standards or expectations for the quantity or quality of those outputs.
3. Impact-Effectiveness – measured by the value of a delivered output after it is received by its user-customer. Measuring this type of performance requires setting up a feedback mechanism to obtain the value of the deliverable as determined on the receiving end of the transaction.

Working Backwards from Result to Job

But what about the boxes? People doing work – isn't that what management is all about?   One advantage of relocating performance to the arrows between groups is that the people themselves have a different access to performance.

When we establish deliverables as the basic units of performance, and require that deliverables be defined by communications between their sender and receiver, the people in any group can work backwards to discover what has to be done to produce and deliver them. They know the specifics of what they will receive, since they negotiated the inputs with the senders of those inputs, i.e., their resource-suppliers. They know the specifics of what they will produce, because they defined those outputs in agreements with their receivers, i.e., their user-customers. This has each group knowing what they have to work with, and what they must produce. They are producing and delivering performance. This, of course, is likely to change the substance of performance reviews, which may be no bad thing.

The methods for establishing deliverables as the basic unit of performance are found in specific types of productive communication, particularly requests, promises, and agreements, with follow-up conversations that support or improve performance of the agreement. Communication, of course, is also a deliverable. It requires getting outside of one's box and connecting with others who are elsewhere. This inconvenience often requires learning to speak and understand different

vocabularies and acronyms, as well as discovering different systems of scheduling, prioritizing, and a myriad of other foreign ways of operating. The value, however, of reduced wastes of time and talent while getting things right the first time far outweighs these nuisances.

PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

There are four types of management conversations that have been found to be productive and effective for producing results and coordinating between groups and organizations (3, 5, 6):

Initiative Conversations are proposals that launch a new project, program, or goal. They outline what is to be accomplished or achieved, by when it can be accomplished, and they include a reason or value for doing it. This gives everyone a big-picture sense of what the future can be, when it is possible, and why it is desirable.

Understanding Conversations are usually conducted with respect to a particular Initiative Conversation, aimed at identifying who will be involved in a new project or goal activity, where resources may come from, and how the goals and objectives might be accomplished. Plans and schedules are drafted and modified, roles and responsibilities discussed and identified, and possible technologies and methodologies are reviewed and examined.   Although these conversations are informative, their real purpose is to ensure that people who will be affected by the changes have an opportunity to engage in a genuine discussion. The resulting plans are then a product of conversation rather than one voice getting "buy-in" for its predetermined case.

Performance Conversations are those in which people make requests, promises, and agreements for actions and/or results. Requests are framed to create a commitment that some individual or group will take a specific action, or produce a specific result, by a certain time and for one or more specified reasons or benefits.   The acceptance of a request constitutes a promise, and establishes an agreement between the parties.   In an effective performance conversation, the requested actions, results, and timelines are discussed completely so that all parties are clear about the conditions of the agreement, and have confidence that it will be performed as agreed.

Closure Conversations bring about a completion of past issues or concerns so they will not operate as a constraint in having discussions or creating agreements in the future.   Four methods for having conversations that complete past-based barriers to communication have been dubbed "the four A's: acknowledgement, appreciation, apology, and amendment.

- *Acknowledgement* involves recognizing the facts of some past event or situation: something happened, and some state of the world exists as a result. For example, if I am ten minutes late to a meeting, I can acknowledge the fact by stating, "I am late." Acknowledgement of the facts is appropriate when something has been done or not done, or said or not said, that may have caused effects for others that could carry negative consequences into future interactions.
- *Appreciation* is the recognition of the value of other people in some specific matter.   The intent is to make it known to others that you see and credit them for what they have said, done, and/or contributed. It allows people to notice what they have accomplished and turn to the future rather than holding on to past incomplete actions or results.   To be effective, appreciation has to be authentic and cannot be used as a manipulation, as in "buttering someone up" to get him to do something.
- *Apology* is an admission of a mistake or misunderstanding that allows other people to change their negative interpretation of an event or interaction into a more positive and generous one. Apologies can provide a way to enable other people to recover or save face

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in a situation they may otherwise believe to be a failure or disappointment. Apologies help people to let go of a particular viewpoint and open up to new thoughts or ideas. For example, when I am late for a meeting, in addition to acknowledging that fact, I can apologize for causing meeting attendees to worry, and for any inconvenience to their discussion.

- ***Amendment*** is a conversation to identify past broken agreements (regardless of who broke them) and to restore trust and credibility for all participants. Agreements, whether explicit or assumed, are broken all the time. When an agreement is not kept as expected, the result is disappointment (and worse) that can linger to affect future interactions. Broken agreements that go unrecognized can erode confidence, credibility, and trust on all sides. To amend a broken agreement, start by recognizing that a particular agreement has been broken, acknowledge the status of that agreement, identify or discover what needs to be done now to "make things right", and either recommit to the agreement (or a revised version of it) that will be honored in the future, or revoke the agreement. This conversation allows people to accept that mistakes have been made in the past, they are not going to be glossed over, and future agreements will be treated with respect and honest communication.

These conversations are differentiated from what might be called unproductive conversations such as gossip, blaming, complaining, etc. In fact, it can be said that an organization's culture may be understood by listening to the kinds of non-productive conversations repeated most often. Almost every organizational culture has a recurring theme of one (or more) of the following conversations:

1. The "scarce resource" whine
2. The "lack of leadership" complaint
3. The "credit-blame" game of who deserves (or doesn't deserve) more of something
4. Politics and preferences (very popular in highly competitive situations)
5. Management jokes and gossip (about particularly juicy targets)
6. The "change for change's sake" gripe
7. Other habitual complaints: Too many interruptions. Too much paperwork. Etc.

Deliverable Agreements: The Basic Engine of Performance Management

The type of conversation that is most important to establishing agreements for deliverables is the Performance Conversation, which includes requests and promises, and boilesdown to a single request for a deliverable and a promise to deliver: Request + Promise = Agreement.   Deliverable agreements are developed between senders and receivers to clarify the following:

- Who is requesting a particular deliverable?
- Who is promising to deliver that product, service, or communication?
- What, exactly, are the attributes of the deliverable?
- When is the agreed date and time of the delivery?
- What is the importance of the deliverable to the sender and to the receiver?

The other important conversation for supporting deliverable agreements is the Closure Conversation. If I am late with my promised delivery, don't wait too long to contact me, let me know you noticed my oversight, and get a fresh due date; or, if I was late with my last delivery, you might want to call me in advance this time to preempt a repeat of my missed due date. Managers who encourage their team members to follow up on promises made are training employees to manage their agreements with communication instead of relying on "trust", "influence" or "style".

Deliverable agreements support performance within groups as well as between them. Assignments to team members can specify clear roles and responsibilities by putting them in terms of deliverables and agreements for deliverables. If you assign me to be responsible for a performance relationship with another group, I can own that relationship and be accountable for getting good deliverable agreements and ensuring that they are implemented per our agreed timeline.   Assignments to staff can be simply another form of deliverable agreements.

Agreements are the basic engine for performance. Efficiency, one type of performance, is a product of the agreement between resource-suppliers and the group receiving the inputs. Managers who do not take responsibility for their agreements with resource-suppliers may prefer to be passive about them, seeing them as a relationship in which they have no say. This is a way of justifying complaining about scarce resources, which is admittedly easier than having the Performance and Closure Conversations to establish an agreement, however unsatisfactory the resulting agreement might ultimately be.   Good management includes establishing good agreements for obtaining resources and using them wisely.

Human Performance Improvement Process

The elements included in the NEI Human Performance Improvement Process map (4, 7) can be implemented using the four productive conversations in different combinations:

- Mission & Vision – Initiative Conversation to launch action toward a new future.
- Business planning & Program guidance and evaluation – Closure of past plans and guidance-evaluation systems + Initiative Conversation to launch new plans and methods + Understanding Conversations to get input on how to implement them.
- Management and Leadership practices – All four conversations, beginning with Closure of the past.
- Organization processes & Performance monitoring – Performance and Closure conversations to support commitments to action and completion for accomplishment.
- Performance gap identification & Causal assessment – Closure conversations to complete the past + Understanding Conversations for a productive discussion about the findings and what they might mean for implementation.
- Plan adjustment & Change management – All four conversations, beginning with Closure of the past.

Communication: The Basic Unit of Managerial Work

Deborah Tannen, in her article on "The Power of Talk" (8), claimed that talk is the lifeblood of managerial work".   It does seem that everything a manager needs to accomplish is accomplished in conversations with employees, bosses, customers, suppliers, and peers. Managers can develop the practice of using the four productive conversations in their meetings, emails, and phone conversations. Even "informal discussions" can be made more productive when a missing conversation is added to the interaction.

One manager (9) uses his meetings – including success stories – to be sure everyone gets the same information and to take advantage of the benefits of providing feedback for continuous improvement. He reports success using a topic-based communication schedule:

- Monday – The plan of work.
- Tuesday – Safety.

- Wednesday – Quality and Production.
- Thursday – Budget and Compliance.
- Friday – Successes of the week.

Other managers have given advice about communications using language that can be interpreted in many different ways, depending on people's educational background or work history. Some recommendations for careful speaking are:

- Priority – This is a word that means one thing to someone who has three things to do, and has another meaning altogether if they have fifty things to do. Similarly, one person's "ASAP" is not the same as another's. Specify a due date, not a relative term like priority or ASAP.
- Scope of work – By definition, this term sets boundaries and creates a silo disconnected from other work and other groups. Unless the scope of work identifies all the key players with which the project must interact, its boundaries do not support the performance network-building required of an effective manager.

- Change – When a change is needed, think – and speak – of it as an "update" or an "upgrade". That little shift in language can prevent "change whining", in which people's eyes glaze over and their hearing shuts down. It is up to the change agent to help people get clear on the reasons for the update, the benefits of upgrading, and the other groups that will be affected by it. Have an Understanding Conversation – a dialogue about all the specific work habits, tasks, and relationships to be altered and what will be involved in doing all that, then create a plan to accomplish it.

- Any terms that rely on the internal states of human beings. One manager points out that when we talk about "feelings" "needs" and "values" we are talking about something that is invisible and may be confusing. She realized this when a senior manager asked her to change the "mindset" of a group of people. She reports wondering if she was being instructed to perform brain surgery. Make things visible to people. Use communication instead of "influence". Establish agreements, not "expectations. This is also true of "accountability": it is not a personality trait – use a scoreboard so people can actually count something.

- Making the other guys wrong – Beware criticizing other departments and offices. It's true they live in another world, with different goals and acronyms, but talking negatively about them is not useful. One researcher (10) found that technical service projects show higher performance when the project manager assumes responsibility for coupling the project to other parts of the organization. Support your team members in being part of the larger team of the organization.

THE COORDINATION TOOLKIT: STRUCTURES FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

There are five structures that provide the tools and practices for performance management at all levels of an organization.

- Team agreements make sure everyone has a strong foundation for operating in the organization and has people knows what works and doesn't work in being a team member.
- Visible goal scoreboards support everyone in seeing goals and the progress being made toward their accomplishment.

- A list of all the key players associated with goal accomplishment lets everyone know what the full playing field looks like, and increases responsibility for operating in a network of agreements.
- Tracking the deliverable agreements established with all key players lets people see how their performance relationships are developing to build toward successful goal fulfillment.
- Finally, feedback on the real-world status of intended results, existing relationships, and deliverable agreements is the lever for keeping things moving.

Each of these tools can be applied, and developed into reliable performance management practices, using the four productive conversations and visual displays of goals and status.

Tool #1: Team Agreements

Establishing the basic "rules of the road" for a work group, whether a team, department, or division, requires communicating all of the agreements that pertain to the group's planning and decision making, operations, and deliverables (inputs and outputs). Often seen as "background understandings", these agreements do not need to be presented often, but they do need to be kept current, and they do need to be part of the on-boarding education of all new employees and contractors. Annual or semi-annual reminders for all employees, as well as notifications about changes or updates, are needed to inform everyone that these agreements still matter.

The value of these team agreements is that they provide a context for teamwork by demonstrating that people are working together within an external environment that has structures and expectations for their performance. Here are some recommendations from successful executives and managers on creating and deploying group agreements:

1. Relevant laws and regulations in the organization's external environment are clearly identified with links available to the full statements of each. This includes laws and regulations of all relevant governmental units and other authorities that have a say about the operations and deliverables associated with the group.
2. Organizational guidelines, rules, and requirements are also communicated, with relevant documents available to all employees.
3. Mission, Vision, and Purpose (MVP) statements for an organization should be made visible on an ongoing basis: some managers post them on the walls of the primary meeting rooms. These MVP statements are usually developed at the top of the organization, so no manager needs to re-invent them, but many managers create something for their group that borrows from the MVP language and tailors it for their sub-organization. If you choose to do this, keep it simple: set your objectives – e.g., for production, safety, quality, and compliance – in language that corresponds to the MVP statements while also communicating clearly in the language of your group.
4. Organization charts need to be readily available, both for the team and for the larger organization within which it operates. These charts may be formalized at the top level of the organization, or the group manager may have decision authority on how to group people – e.g., by functions, by intended results, or by skill-mixes. Some managers use the hierarchical organization chart format only, while others add the deliverable network type of chart that shows the group's relationships to internal and external resource suppliers, users, and customers.
5. Meeting protocols are important to make clear and specific. Whether meetings are face-to-face or by phone or internet, established meeting schedules are a reliable way of creating a result-oriented work rhythm. Several highly successful executives have proposed two rules for creating what they call an effective "meeting culture". First, if

anyone is calling a meeting, s/he must have an agenda that includes a statement of intended results or outcomes for the meeting, and send it to all invitees in advance of the meeting. This rule reminds meeting-callers to invite only the people who need to attend, and to give thought about how to use people's time well. Rule two is that when you are asked to attend a meeting, you are entitled to find out the agenda, the purpose, and the duration of the meeting. If the meeting is mandatory, put it in your calendar and go. If it is not, you are permitted to decline the invitation or to send a representative who will bring back any news, requests, or requirements. This encourages people to take control of their schedule. One executive keeps a third rule: no employee is required to attend a meeting for which they have not received an agenda.

6. Team & individual work systems are maintained, discussed, and updated at regular group meetings to avoid a buildup of counter-productive habits. Each element of these systems is reviewed and refreshed whenever a goal result or due date is missed. Work systems include:

   - Scheduling systems – You need a standard set of agreements for how to schedule work, including the agreement that each individual puts their agreed results, due dates, and production times into their personal calendars.
   - Work planning – Tell the truth about work time per tasks. Don't pretend tasks can be done in half the time. And don't just multiply your time estimates by three.
   - Phone and email – Establish agreements about when and where the use of phones and email/texting will be off limits: meetings, trainings, etc.   A useful email policy can also include specifications of what should be on the Subject Lines of certain types of emails, and that if you are addressed in the "To" line, it means there is action you need to take. If you are only on the "CC" line, it means you are being informed and there is no action needed on your part at this time. Ask people to return the favor.
   - Shared documentation – Establish locations for documents pertaining to key players and deliverable agreements so they are visible to all those who need to use them.

7. Team members agree to participate in building and using all five of the coordination tools: Team Agreements, Goal-Performance Scoreboard, Players List, Deliverable-Agreement Scoreboard, and Reality Feedback.

Tool #2: A Goal Performance Scoreboard & Calendar

Maintaining a visual display of a group's goals, and the timelines for meeting them, is a powerful way to keep everyone aware of the game being played. Like a scoreboard and time-clock in a sports arena, it notifies team members and the audience of the status of the quest.

Experts recommend having a dialogue about what is to be accomplished, preferably with key group members, to establish the metrics and timelines for success, for example:

- How to track and update all required organization-level metrics.
- If all three types of performance are not included in existing metrics, would another metric be useful for the group members to see?   It can be beneficial to have at least two of the three types of performance reflected in metrics: group efficiency-productivity, output quantity-quality, and feedback on output effectiveness-impact.
- Determine if there are any other metrics that would be useful to let group members see progress being made on their mission-relevant projects or tasks.

Then post the group's "success timeline" on a visible scoreboard – as a reliable part of the emailed weekly meeting agenda, on the wall in the meeting room, by the coffee pot, etc.   Verbal communication alone is insufficient for performance management. People forget, misinterpret, or have communication impairments – in speaking clearly and/or listening keenly – that can create misunderstandings about what is to be accomplished and by when. Communicate visually, not just verbally.

Tool #3: A List or Diagram of Key Players associated with Each Goal

Every goal or project has its own unique "performance circle" of players – other organizational departments or offices, and external resource suppliers and user-customers – that will be a necessary part of the work for a successful outcome. Most of the failures in projects or programs, including lateness, quality problems, and resource shortfalls, are due to the failure to identify all the other individuals and groups who will impact (or be impacted by) the project in some way.

Expert managers learn to identify these key players as part of their planning work. Who is expecting something from the work your group is doing? Who has something your group needs? Who receives the products and services that result from your group's work? Who can help you?

Some managers actually draw out the hub-and-spoke diagram that captures a particular goal – the hub – and draws spokes connecting the goal to each of the people and groups that constitute "key players" interacting with that goal. One executive uses this starter list:

1. The financial and budget people are in every diagram, because we need their expertise in costing and procurement matters for all our work. They also expect to see budget reports from our groups, so the deliverables go both ways.
2. The human resources group is in every diagram too, because we turn to them for things like developing job skills, resolving conflicts or dealing with behavior problems. They also keep us on track about salary adjustments and other things going on in the organization as a whole.
3. Of course each project has its unique resource suppliers and user-customers, both internal and external, but some real thinking has to go into identifying where we need to get help from other experts and specialists. People who are knowledgeable in root-cause analysis, for example, or specialized types of technical problem-solving might be needed to reach some of our goals.

The players list, whether as a list or a hub-and-spoke diagram, may be combined with the next coordination tool to create a single display showing the status of deliverable agreements with each key player.

Tool #4: A Scoreboard-Calendar for the Status of Agreements with Each Key Player

Developing and maintaining a calendar of agreements – both within the group and between the group and other key players – is a strong support for coordination. This display, ideally posted in the physical or electronic meeting area(s), shows the key players associated with each goal or objective, and what agreements have been established with that player:

- What have we promised to deliver to that player, and by when?
- What has that player promised to deliver to us, and by when?
- Is the agreement established and signed off? If not, what else is needed, and by when?

The value of this display is threefold:

1. It reveals the places where agreements have not been well defined. A blank space on a chart or diagram brings attention to what is missing. Establishing agreements with key players for what will be sent, received, and exchanged is the most neglected part of work. Without agreements, time is wasted producing or communicating things that are unnecessary or undesired, or leaving out ingredients that are important to the receiver. A complete scoreboard-calendar shows whether agreements are active, in development, or still awaiting assignment or development.
2. It supports making assignments to team members, clarifying who will take responsibility for creating and maintaining productive relationships with specific key players. People who are in charge of owning a relationship with a key player provide a living link to valuable resources outside the group.
3. It shifts team members' thinking, planning, and scheduling from a "doing" mode and into a "deliverable" mode. This increases awareness of the other people involved, those who are expecting something or have an interest in certain results associated with one or more objectives. In other words, people focus less on what they have to *do*, and more on what is *due.*

Bottom line, this deliverable scoreboard supports managers in developing and strengthening accountability for their team. Without tracking wins and losses, there is no accountability, and without accountability there is no accomplishment. Support team members in coordination with others to create and fulfill deliverable agreements and they gain a skill that will provide returns throughout their career.

Tool #5 – Reality Feedback on Goal Performance

Maintaining a reliable flow of real-world feedback is a foundation for coordinating a group of people working to achieve a goal or objective. People cannot work effectively for very long without seeing where they are going and when they need to course-correct or pay attention to a different aspect of their assignment. Feedback can be provided in a variety of ways, but two generic methods recommended by successful managers are reported to ensure effective performance ownership and tracking:

1. Establish a regular and frequent update schedule for the visible displays (the Goals Scoreboard-Calendar and the Deliverable Agreements Scoreboard-Calendar). When a performance group can count on seeing the scoreboard updates every week in their team meeting, for example, it is easier for them to focus their attention on performing, scheduling, and completing mission-relevant tasks, and to sort out less relevant activities. This happens because there is an opportunity for accomplishment available: seeing that agreements have been established or fulfilled with key players can be a source of encouragement and confidence for employees.
2. Establish a way of communicating the updates other than simply posting them. Bring the accomplishments into a conversation that acknowledges what has been produced and delivered, which key player relationships are functioning well, and where attention needs to be directed now. These Closure Conversations clear the way for discussion of what next steps are needed.

The Standard Nuclear Performance Model (7), highlights the importance of performance feedback. The model includes, in its list of core business operational processes, the feedback from a Cost/Budget function to the organization-level office for Business Services. A second feedback connection takes information from the Performance Improvement function to the organization-level Leadership office. These two types of feedback ensure that the status of

performance on a variety of variables is relayed to people who can communicate it widely to other internal and external players as needed. Smart managers will take the trouble to ensure that their own teams see this feedback and have the opportunity to adjust their planning and schedules for performance improvements in all their mission-relevant work.

The Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS) wheel defines planning elements for the purpose of performing work safely (9). It's a good tool, showing five components cycling one to the next, forming a closed circle:

1. Define the Scope of Work
2. Analyze Hazards
3. Develop / Implement Controls
4. Perform Work
5. Feedback / Improvement

Again, the role of feedback is critical for managers and employees to know when they are on track and when they need to make adjustments in their work planning, scheduling, and performance.

CONCLUSION

What to manage: people or results? The leverage for managing results is in your communication. Productive conversations can support the development and implementation of agreements for deliverables to and from the key players relevant to your goals. When you manage the agreements, you are also managing the performance of both people and results.   Go with the leverage: manage agreements for deliverables.

Three recommendations:

Use the three basic ingredients of performance management:

1. Focus attention on deliverables – the products, services, and communications that are sent to other groups and received from other groups – above the inner workings of your team;
2. Practice using the four productive conversations: (1) Close out the past and keep the slate clean; (2) Initiate new things in an engaging way; (3) Understand how people will be affected by new proposals and get their ideas on how to make things work; and (4) Performance is a product of requests, promises, and agreements – engage your team in learning to use them.
3. Reach out and talk with your key players. Let them know how they fit into your goals, and work with them to spell out what should go back and forth between you: products, services, and communications that will support your team's success.

Create and deploy your coordination toolkit:

1. Establish ground-rule agreements for team members;
2. Make your goal results and timelines visible on a scoreboard-calendar;
3. Build and update the list of key players that affect your team's success;
4. Track the status of your team's agreements with each of those key players; and
5. Provide regular and frequent feedback on goals, players, and agreements.

KISS: Keep It Simple, Stupid. Using productive communication and creating deliverable agreements isn't rocket science, and doesn't need lots of analysis. Keep your management system simple and easy to use, for yourself and your team members. You will all benefit.

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