

3 MYTHS FOR MANAGING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

MYTH #1

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This is part one of a three-part blog series on performance development.

MYTH: A fully automated/on-line performance management system from a reputable vendor will make sure that our performance management system is efficient and effective.

Just as television is often used as a convenient and time-saving babysitter to inform, enlighten and guide our children, so do many companies turn to automated performance management systems to inform, enlighten and guide their workforces. Of course, automated performance management systems have had about as much success replacing managers as the television has had replacing parents.

What is it exactly that a manager can do that a system cannot?

1. **Face-to-Face:** Managers should conduct face-to-face meetings with each employee to reach agreement about expectations for everyday on-the-job work – both tasks (if necessary) and outcomes (where appropriate). These meetings must focus not only on what the employee is expected to do but why it matters, who else is impacted by it and how the outcomes of their work impact the organization. As the organization changes, expectations will evolve, meaning managers must engage in continual communication with their employees about any nuances that will impact their day-to-day work. **An automated system can record the outputs of these conversations but cannot facilitate them.**
2. **Engagement:** Managers must engage every employee for whom they are responsible in active, two-way conversation to get heart-felt agreement on the goals he or she is willing to be held accountable for. Each goal must have clear line-of-sight as to how it aligns with or supports the team, the unit or the organization. This line of sight must be forward-looking while also linking to the “now” that the employee is being asked to deliver on. **An automated system can record the outputs of these conversations but cannot facilitate them.**
3. **Observation:** A manager has the responsibility to observe continually the work and results of every employee for whom they are responsible. If the manager and employee are co-located, these observations should become a natural part of ongoing communication, resulting in real-time feedback and focused spot-coaching where conversations are used to inspire continuous improvement instead of criticizing or chastising. If they are not co-located, the manager must establish a network with the employee that identifies the best resources to provide trusted feedback on work done and outcomes achieved. **An automated system can record the outputs of these conversations but cannot facilitate them.**

Automated systems cannot look an employee in the eye and perceive either a lack of comprehension or the passion in their heart. Until they can, the manager-employee relationship cannot be replaced by technology, just as the baseball scouts weren't replaced by video recording. Technology can be a powerful tool, but its purpose is to enhance a manager's capabilities – not to replace them.