

## Leading people

# Appraise – but don't demotivate

Focusing on the bad things leaves staff feeling hurt, so accentuate the positive



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I'm all for learning from other sectors – honest I am. But there are times when I could scream with exasperation at the sheer idiocy of adopting some of their practices without first questioning their effectiveness or appropriateness to charity and voluntary workers.

The latest shocker is the introduction of private sector-style performance-management systems in charities, which I don't think worked well even in the private sector.

I recently met a seriously demotivated charity worker whose organisation had introduced an appraisal system that used a scoring system out of five, with five being exceptional and one being below average. And what did this charity worker learn? That the number two is deeply hurtful and demotivating.

Monitoring and measuring the performance of staff – and, when appropriate, volunteers – is a good thing. But doing it badly isn't. Appraisals should help managers to send their staff off into the new work year feeling inspired, confident, motivated and able to achieve. A good appraisal should be a culmination of a series of one-to-ones during the year, at which you have given feedback on performance as you go along. There should be no surprises, because any issues in performance

will have been dealt with through the one-to-ones. At the appraisal, you can concentrate on what they're good at, where they've improved and what is possible for the future.

The best systems allow staff to self-appraise. Let them tell you how well they've done, while you keep your mouth shut. If you give people the freedom to criticise their own performance, they are invariably

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tougher on themselves than you are. Your job is to reassure them that they can do better in the coming year and establish what support, training and resources they need.

Finally, linking pay to performance is one of the best ways of demotivating people. If you have a pay review system, keep it on a separate timeline to the appraisal. Only a complete numpty will admit to any weaknesses if they know it's going to affect their pay. If you want them to give you an honest self-assessment, keep the dosh out of it.

## In theory...

### Emma De Vita's weekly look at management-speak

#### The knowledge worker

To anyone under the age of 30, the 60s was a decade of freedom, festivals and sexual revolution. London was filled with people who dressed like fictional sleuth Austin Powers and grooved around Carnaby Street in Mini Coopers. But few people will be aware that another revolution, a far less glamorous one, took place at the same time in the world of business.

Peter Drucker, the management guru to blow all other management gurus out of the water, published *The Age of Discontinuity* in 1969. Why a revolution?

In the book, Drucker first used the term "knowledge worker" to describe a manager who is a thoughtful and brainy person, not a pen-pushing, paper-shifting supervisor. A knowledge worker is prized for what they know and the contacts they have cultivated. They are paid to use their grey matter to solve problems and to manage their resources intelligently, not simply to execute dictates from on high. The professional manager had come of age.

What does that mean for you? Drucker's thoughts are as pertinent to you as a professional manager at a charity as they are to the chief executive of an investment bank. Without Drucker and the birth of the knowledge worker, we would still be in a world filled with grey-suited, corporate drones – though if you look carefully, there are still a few knocking about the place.

Drucker recognised that, with time, knowledge would become power and that organisations would want to hire managers for their knowledge and their contacts, not just their ability to crack the whip or dangle a carrot.

Apart from managers, many others can thank Drucker for his management revolution – not least business schools, which have capitalised on the elevation of the manager from lowly supervisor to so-called professional. They charge tens of thousands of pounds to educate you in the ways of the professional manager. It's not just about knowing which tie to team with which suit. You also have to think about your socks.

**Emma De Vita is a senior section editor on Management Today**

## Work to rule Data Protection Act, part five: remedies for breach



**Emma Burrows** is a partner and head of the employment group at Trowers & Hamlins solicitors

If you don't comply with the act, some nasty surprises could be in store

In the final part in this series on the Data Protection Act 1998, we will turn our attention to what happens if an employer is not complying with its principles.

Under Section 40 of the act, the Information Commissioner can serve an enforcement notice on an employer, requiring it to comply with the data protection principles it has breached and to take certain steps or refrain from processing any personal data. The enforcement notice must contain a right of appeal to the Data Protection Tribunal.

Staff who believe their personal data is not being processed in compliance with the act may make a request to the commissioner for an assessment. If the commissioner receives a request for an assessment, he can serve the employer with an information notice requiring the

employer to provide certain information within a specified time.

If the employer fails to comply with an enforcement or information notice, it will be guilty of a criminal offence. The crime is punishable as a summary conviction, with a maximum fine of £5,000.

If workers suffer damage because their employer fails to comply with its data-protection obligations, they can issue proceedings in the High Court or a County Court pursuant to section 13 of the act.

Should the High Court determine that a worker has suffered damage because the employer failed to comply with its obligations under the act, unlimited damages could be awarded. Where data is inaccurate, the High Court also has powers to order its rectification, blocking, erasure or destruction.

It is worth noting that, although any enforcement action would be based on a failure to meet the requirements of the act itself, relevant parts of the *Employment Practices Data Protection Code* are likely to be cited by the Information Commissioner in connection with any enforcement action that arises in relation to the processing of personal information in the employment context.

It is therefore important that employers are familiar with the provisions of the code and do their best to implement the good practice recommendations contained in it.

Employers are advised to develop a data-protection policy if they do not already have one, and to put in place proper practices and procedures to govern the storing and processing of personal and sensitive personal data.