

Pathways to Management and Leadership

Level 3: First Line Management

Unit 3008V1

Improving Team Performance

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Unit 3008V1: Improving Team Performance

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Improving Team Performance

SAMPLE MATERIAL

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About this workbook

The unit

The main purpose of this workbook is to support you as you study for the Chartered Management Institute Level 3 – First Line Management, so it specifically focuses on the content of the syllabus for Unit 3008V1, *Improving Team Performance*.

This workbook provides underpinning knowledge and develops understanding to improve your skills as well as to prepare for future assessment. If you are studying towards the Level 3, then you will be assessed by your approved centre on 'your knowledge and understanding of' the following learning outcomes:

1. be able to identify issues which affect performance
2. know how to select and apply the best course of action to address a performance issue
3. be able to take action to achieve the performance issue of an individual.

The aims of this workbook

This workbook aims to help you learn how to:

- identify issues which affect performance
- select and apply the best course of action from the range of approaches available to you
- follow through to achieve the desired effect.

Syllabus coverage

The table below shows which sections of the workbook address each assessment criteria of the qualification syllabus.

Unit 3008V1: Improving Team Performance Syllabus coverage	Addressed within section
1.1 Describe the manager's role in identifying performance issues in the team	1, 3, 4
1.2 Describe how to evaluate individual and team performance and behaviours	1, 2, 4
1.3 Identify the limits of responsibility for dealing with individual and team performance	1, 2
2.1 Identify the range of approaches available	1, 2, 3, 4
2.2 Describe the different methods available in providing help and support in order to improve performance of an individual	2, 3
2.3 Explain how to conduct a performance counselling session for an individual	2, 3
2.4 Explain the importance of maintaining confidentiality	2
3.1 Agree with a team member an action plan to address a performance issue	2
3.2 Explain the range of support services available	2
3.3 Explain how to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved	2
3.4 Explain the circumstances when disciplinary and grievance procedures may be invoked	3, 4
3.5 Explain the first line manager's role in a disciplinary and grievance situation	3
3.6 Identify why records of action plan achievements and actions taken are required	4

Getting started

One of the most important aspects of managing a team is monitoring people's performance, and dealing with any issues that arise. When this is done well, the team thrives and builds. When it is ignored, or handled badly, the issues often escalate into larger problems.

Good performance management also helps a team and individuals to understand what is expected of them. Then when they do hit a problem, they are more likely to understand the issue, and why they need help.

This workbook, then, is about recognising and responding effectively to performance issues in your team, while maintaining respect for the individual.

How to use the workbooks

The workbooks provide ideas from writers and thinkers in the management and leadership field. They offer opportunities for you to investigate and apply these ideas within your working environment and job-role.

Structure

Each workbook is divided into sections that together cover the knowledge and understanding required for that unit of the Level 3 in First Line Management. Each section starts with a clear set of objectives that identify the background knowledge to be covered, and the management skills in the workplace that enable you to demonstrate this knowledge. You do not have to complete the sections in the order they appear in the workbook, but you should try to cover them all to make sure that your work on the unit is complete. There are self-assessment questions at the end of each section that allow you to check your progress. You may want to discuss your answers to the self-assessment questions with your line manager or a colleague.

Activities

Throughout the workbooks there are activities for you to complete. These activities are designed to help you to develop yourself as a manager. Space is provided within the activities for you to enter your own thoughts or findings. Feedback is then provided to confirm your input or to offer more ideas for you to consider.

To get the best from the workbooks, you should try to complete each activity fully before moving on. However, if the answer is obvious to you because the issue is one you have encountered previously, then you might just note some bullet points that you can then compare quickly against the feedback. You may sometimes find it difficult to write your complete response to an activity in the space provided. Don't worry about this – just keep a separate notebook handy, which you can use and refer to as needed.

Try not to look at the feedback section before completing an activity. You might like to try covering up the feedback with a postcard or piece of paper while you are working through an activity.

Timings

Timings are suggested for each section and activity, although it is important that **you** decide how much time to spend on an activity. Some activities may occupy only a few moments' thought, while others may be of particular interest and so you

might decide to spend half an hour or more exploring the issues. This is fine – the purpose of the activities is to help you reflect on what you are doing, and to help you identify ways of enhancing your effectiveness. It is always worth writing something though, even if it's brief – the act of writing will reinforce your learning much more effectively than just referring to the feedback.

Scenarios

There are scenarios and examples throughout each workbook to illustrate key points in real workplace settings. The scenarios cover a wide range of employment sectors. As you work through, you might like to think of similar examples from your own experience.

Planning your work

The reading and reflection, scenarios and activities in each section of the workbooks are designed to take around two hours to complete (although some may take longer). This is a useful indicator of the minimum length of time that you should aim to set aside for a study session. Try to find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted and where you can keep your workbooks, notes and papers reasonably tidy. You may also like to think about the time of day when you work best – are you a 'morning person' who likes to get things done at the start of the day, or do you work better in the evening when there may be fewer disturbances?

Preparing for assessment

Further information on assessment is available in the Student Guide produced as part of the *Pathways to Management and Leadership* series. If you have any further questions about assessment procedures, it is important that you resolve these with your tutor or centre co-ordinator as soon as possible.

Further reading

Suggestions for further reading and links to management information are available via ManagementDirect through the Study Support section of the Institute's website at <http://mde.managers.org.uk/members>. Alternatively, email ask@managers.org.uk or telephone 01536 207400. You will also find titles for further reading in the Bibliography at the end of this workbook.

The CMI Management Library holds an extensive range of books and pamphlets for loan to members. A postal loan service is offered to members in the UK only. You will only pay your return postal charges. Go to www.managers.org.uk/library to review the collection and to place your requests.

Section 1 Managing capability

Learning outcomes (about 1½ hours)

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- 1.1 Describe the manager's role in identifying performance issues in the team
- 1.2 Describe how to evaluate individual and team performance and behaviours
- 1.3 Identify the limits of responsibility for dealing with individual and team performance
- 2.1 Identify the range of approaches available.

Performance issues

Organisations exist for the purpose of providing services or goods to their clients and customers. To do this effectively, an organisation needs to perform well, in terms of the quality and cost-effectiveness of its provision. Every individual in the organisation needs to contribute to this.

When someone doesn't perform well, then not only is the person failing to achieve what is expected of them, there is also a high likelihood that the department will be affected too. Ultimately this will reflect on the overall contribution to the organisation's aims.

So, one of the most important tasks of all managers is to monitor and manage the performance of the people that they are responsible for. Performance issues can crop up at any time, with anyone. The first (and probably the most important) step is to identify any performance issues, so that you can deal with them quickly.

Activity

Activity 1.1 (about 5 minutes)

What sort of things would you consider to be performance issues?

Feedback

Many people mention poor performance here, and it's probably true that most issues are to do with either the quality or quantity of work.

However, there may also be performance issues even if someone is performing well. For example, they may need support or training to meet the requirements of their job.

In this section you will explore ways of looking at performance to help you to identify issues, their possible causes, and how you might respond appropriately as a manager.

The symptoms of poor performance

How do you recognise performance issues? What are the symptoms?

Activity

Activity 1.2

(about 10 minutes)

How would you know when someone in your team, whose work is good, has performance issues?

Feedback

If a member of your team has clear, achievable objectives, and you are monitoring their work appropriately, you should already be satisfied with their performance.

You may suspect that there are performance issues because of other things you notice. For example, the person may be:

- *appearing more stressed at work*
- *often meeting deadlines at the last possible moment (and they used to meet them with time to spare)*
- *showing a gradual (or in some cases sudden) drop in their standard of work*
- *raising questions more frequently than before*
- *complaining more frequently than before*
- *working longer hours (coming in earlier, or staying later).*

Or, of course, the person may come to you to ask for support.

*You should always try to understand not only **what** has changed, but **why** it has changed, and what effect this is having on individuals and on the team.*

Activity

Activity 1.3

(about 10 minutes)

How would you know when someone is not performing well?

Feedback

There are many ways in which you could know this, of course. The indicators listed in activity 1.2 also apply here.

You may also have mentioned some of these:

- *complaints from customers, colleagues, other departments*
- *targets not met*
- *objectives not met*
- *decrease in service or product outputs*
- *increase in materials being used*
- *increased wastage*
- *overspends*
- *late deliveries*
- *poor quality services or products*
- *reports and reviews not completed, late, or of poor quality*
- *missed planning or review meetings.*

These things might happen for a range of reasons. The big challenge for managers is to discover whether they are happening because of poor performance, or because of a wider issue.

It's essential to deal with issues like these quickly. Many of them are critical to the success of the business. You should deal with each situation as soon as you identify it to prevent the problem from growing or spreading, and to tackle the cause.

However, bear in mind that most activities at work are interlinked. What might appear to be the result of someone's poor performance might in fact be a problem in an area over which the person has no control.

The causes of poor performance

Activity

Activity 1.4

(about 5 minutes)

List some external reasons why there may be a drop in performance levels.

Feedback

There are many things that could cause a drop in performance. Some will be specific to your organisation or type of business. Your list may have included:

- *change in customer demand*
- *shortage of resources or materials*
- *public holidays and absences*
- *sickness or holiday absences by other team members or suppliers*
- *strikes or difficulties with transport or delivery services*
- *organisational restructuring or changes in processes*
- *changes in requirements*
- *systems failure (computers, machinery)*
- *issues in people's private lives*
- *poor team-working or bad feeling between people in the area*
- *poor working practices and procedures*
- *motivation issues.*

So, if you notice poor performance, it's important that you find out the cause, rather than just assume that it is an individual who is failing.

Equally, if performance appears to rise significantly, you should check whether it is due to extraordinary effort on someone's part, or whether other factors have assisted in smoothing the path. This is particularly true if you are intending to reward the increased performance. If you reward for good performance when it has been artificially boosted by other factors, other members of the team are likely to feel this is very unfair. You may temporarily motivate the person who is now performing at a high level, but demotivate the rest of your team, who are probably putting in just as much effort.

(If you have studied the workbook for Unit 3002V1, *Resource Planning*, you might recognise these issues as being important parts of expectancy theory. If you would like to explore this further, you will find an extract from Unit 3002V1 in Appendix 1.)

Tackling poor performance

Imagine that you have noticed poor performance, and as far as you can see, it is caused by the individual, rather than other factors. You will need to tackle the issue to bring performance back on track. (If you don't, it may imply to them and to others that you find it acceptable for work to be below standard.)

Setting the standards

To begin with, everyone needs to know what standards they are working to.

All your staff should know exactly:

- what is expected of them
- how their performance will be measured.

Activity

Activity 1.5

(about 5 minutes)

How do your team know what is expected of them, and how their performance will be measured?

Feedback

You probably mentioned that individuals know what is expected of them through:

- *their job descriptions*
- *annual objectives and targets*
- *project and work-piece specifications*
- *discussions regarding details of projects and aspects of the work*
- *formal and informal feedback.*

Their performance is probably measured by:

- *the appraisal process*
- *project review mechanisms*
- *increments, bonuses and reward schemes*
- *possible promotions or awards.*

You may also have mentioned the behavioural aspect. Expectations are set by:

- *conditions of service*
- *codes of conduct*
- *values statements*
- *legal requirements.*

Your organisation will also have procedures to deal with:

- *complaints from customers, clients, or colleagues*
- *absences or lateness*
- *poor personal style or habits that break the socially accepted pattern*
- *illegal actions.*

Capability and conduct

Many organisations manage work performance and behavioural issues within a single performance management system. But putting the two aspects together into one process can confuse the issue. A person's task achievement may be poor even if their behaviour is excellent; and excellent task achievement can occur even when someone is badly behaved. So it is good practice to separate them out into two distinct processes.

Organisations may refer to the processes in different ways. The work output performance process is often known as the 'capability procedure'. Behavioural processes may be known as the 'discipline and grievance procedures'.

This section focuses on managing capability, and Section 2 is about managing behaviour.

'ASK ABE'

You may have seen the 'ASK ABE' model (Favell, 2004) already. It appears in the workbook for Unit 3001V1, *Personal Development as a First Line Manager*.

Actions

Skills

Knowledge

Attitude

Behaviour

Emotions

In the workbook for Unit 3001V1, the emphasis is on using 'ASK ABE' to give a well-rounded and focused approach to the job.

Here, you are concerned more with how people perform. You may be able to use the model to understand what you should be looking for, and how to tackle the issues. The 'ASK' part of the model relates more to capability issues, the 'ABE' part more to conduct issues. (You will look at 'ASK' in this section, *Managing capability*, and at 'ABE' in Section 2 *Managing behaviour*.)

The tools and techniques for dealing with capability and conduct issues are largely the same: it's the nature of the problem that may be different. So, although they are covered in separate sections in this workbook, you can use the techniques in either situation.

Performance – the work output

Work output can be defined as the extent to which the member of staff performs the right actions, in the right way, at the right time, using the right mix of skills and knowledge to ensure that the activity provides what is needed.

If there seems to be a problem with the work output, using 'ASK' should help you to understand the nature of the problem. It might be caused by the actions themselves, or a lack of skills, or

poor (or misapplied) knowledge. Then you can look at the options available for tackling it.

Scenario

What's the problem?

A member of staff is performing badly on the computer. Everything is taking too long to complete, there are several mistakes, and the formatting is poor.

The problem may be to do with a number of things.

- **Actions:** they might not be taking the trouble to check what they are doing, or perhaps are not leaving themselves enough time to complete it properly.
- **Skills:** typing speed and capability may be an issue. Maybe they've never learned to key properly, and use the 'one finger' approach?
- **Knowledge:** maybe they don't really know what is expected of them, or don't know how to format in the required way?

Activity

Activity 1.6

(about 5 minutes)

What might it be appropriate for you to do if it is someone's actions that seem to be at fault?

Feedback

You could:

- *observe the performance, and give feedback*
- *provide coaching over a number of operations, or weeks*
- *give a demonstration of exactly what is required, and how it should be done*
- *allocate an experienced person to closely supervise activity for a while.*

In practice, you might combine a number of these. For example, you could start with a demonstration, then provide coaching, then observe with feedback to check performance is now improving, and then allocate a supervisor or ongoing coach to ensure that performance stays good.

Activity

Activity 1.7

(about 5 minutes)

What might it be appropriate for you to do if it is someone's skills that seem to be causing the problem?

Feedback

In this case, you might decide to:

- *send them on a course to update their skills*
- *provide practice situations or simulations until they have gained the skills*
- *provide coaching from someone who can offer tips to enhance the skills.*

Again, perhaps you would select a combination of these, to suit the particular situation.

Activity

Activity 1.8

(about 5 minutes)

And finally, what might it be appropriate for you to do if it seems to be someone's knowledge that is weak?

Feedback

You could provide:

- *clear instructions as to exactly what is required and when*
- *more information about the equipment or process to be used*
- *an operating manual for the equipment or process*
- *an evening class or self-study materials on the topic.*

Again, you would probably need to offer a range of these sorts of solutions.

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