

HR News Spring 2018



Welcome to the Spring edition of HRizon's newsletter containing the latest news, tips and advice to guide you through the challenges of employment and ensure that your business is protected.

This season we will be discussing what to do when a longstanding employee starts to underperform; simple ways to improve your performance management practices; and, despite the recent cold weather, Spring is on the way...so a few ideas on how to boost morale through the warmer months when all staff can think about is being away from the workplace.

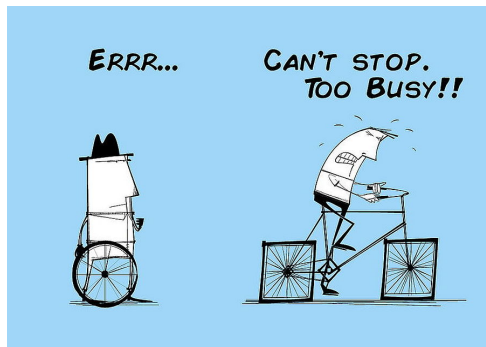


What to do when a longstanding employee starts underperforming

When most of us think about the problems that our businesses can face due to staff underperformance, we imagine that the issues in question are usually created when we recruit the wrong person. After all, the process of finding the right member of staff can be tricky, and there are many things that you need to do to ensure that you're giving individuals everything they need to hit the ground running.

But what if you have a member of staff who has been with you for quite a while, and has always made a solid contribution, but you suddenly start to notice that their performance is slipping?

Read below to find out more.

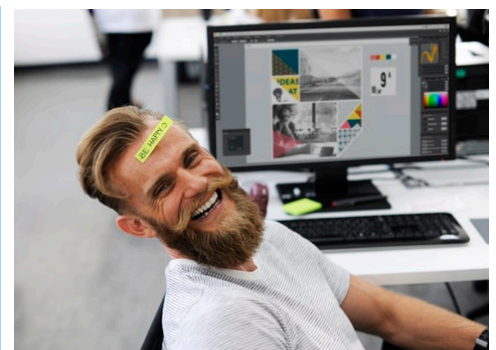


Your performance management checklist

Most business owners would be quick to say that they invest in thorough and robust performance management systems. After all, if you want to achieve your overarching goals, then you need to make sure that you're getting the most out of your staff.

The simple truth though is that too many business owners are missing out on a wealth of opportunities to really get the most out of their staff. Make your way through our checklist to start the process of taking your performance management practices to the next level.

Scroll down to find out more.



Nine morale boosters that won't break the bank this Summer

The warmer months can be a tricky time for employers. Members of staff are likely to be jetting off on holiday, and those left holding the fort can feel demotivated and restless.

Thinking outside of the box can provide you with plenty of inspiration when it comes to breathing some fresh air into the workplace and cost you very little.

We're going to talk you through ten morale boosters that you can implement straightaway to make a real difference to your productivity, output and the general feel within your business.

Scroll down to read more.

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What to do when a longstanding employee starts underperforming



Your longstanding members of staff are often loyal, engaged and eager to play their part in helping you to reach your strategic goals. But what should you do when things start to go wrong, and you notice a significant drop in performance?

Don't pretend that it's not happening

If your member of staff has previously met their goals and made a strong contribution to the company, then you might think that the best approach is to just wait and see what happens. After all, doesn't everyone go through patches when they're feeling a little unmotivated?

This is absolutely NOT the thing to do though if you're serious about growing a strong and engaged workforce. If you start treating staff differently, you're going to run into problems sooner rather than later. As well, your other members of staff will quickly notice that something isn't quite right. Perception is important, and you need to act with integrity and in a timely manner. Nobody wants to have difficult conversations, especially when it's with valued members of staff who have been with the business for a long time. As a business owner though, it's your duty. If you're struggling to take action on the situation, take a step back and think about things objectively.

Get together for an informal chat about the situation

As a first port of call, arrange an informal meeting with the individual and raise your concerns about the problems that you've become aware of. Speak to them about what they feel is going wrong and find out if there's anything that you can do to support them.

There's a whole host of issues that could be at play and pinpointing precisely what is going wrong is the first step in getting things back on the right track. Don't jump to assumptions before you've got all the information and be sure to act on the details that you take away from the meeting.

Put an improvement plan in place and provide the necessary support

Once you've spoken with your employee and agreed that changes need to be made, it's absolutely vital that you create a structured and detailed improvement plan. Simply telling the member of staff that they need to make changes is not enough. It's ambiguous, it's open to interpretation, and it's not going to help anyone. Instead, set objective goals for the individual to meet. Make sure that your employee agrees to them and get them down in writing. It's important that the plan will help you to get things back on track, but don't expect miracles overnight. Consistent, small changes are often more sustainable, and will be easier to manage.

It's not enough to agree to the necessary changes and then assume that everything will fall into place. It may be the case that extra training is required. There are many things that you can do within the workplace on a day-to-day basis that will ensure your staff feel supported. For example, you could allocate mentors and coaches, arrange regular catch-up meetings and invite plenty of feedback around what you could do to help staff to reach their goals. Listening is essential.

Act in accordance with your policies and procedures

Your policies and procedures exist to uphold standards. They ensure that you act in accordance with the law, that your staff are treated fairly and equally, and that everyone is working towards wider goals and objectives. So, make sure that you're using them.

If you have concerns about how equipped you are to manage underperformance, we can help.
Contact Becca on 07551 007591 or email becca.roberts@hrizon.co.uk

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Your performance management practices...move them to the next level



Creating HR policies and procedures isn't just about ticking a few boxes. Your documentation should support the day-to-day running of your business, prevent any problems from occurring, and ensure that you have a clear route to follow if things go wrong. Done correctly, they can save you a load of time, money and hassle.

If you don't have a performance management policy that your staff know about and understand, then this needs to be your first action point. It should be noted here that any HR policy needs to be regularly reviewed.

- Is it fulfilling its purpose?
- Is there room for improvement?
- Are there certain issues that keep arising that need to be tackled?

If you haven't recently reviewed your documentation, then take this as a reminder to do so.

Design a framework to manage conversations

There needs to be a degree of flexibility in your conversations and each and every member of staff will be different. Still though, having a framework that allows you to structure the meetings and cover key points is essential.

Exactly what you decide to include will depend on the nature of your business, though you'll want to consider how you'll include positive feedback, how you'll introduce areas that need to be improved and how you'll set goals.

Upskill your line managers

As your business grows, it's unlikely that you will be able to manage all the performance discussions. The responsibility will be passed over to your line managers, and this of course makes sense if they are the ones who staff report to on a daily basis. What you need to think about here is how you're ensuring that line managers have the appropriate skills and training.

- Are they confident with the task?
- Do they understand its importance?
- And are they operating within the policies and frameworks that you have created?

Ensure that you have a comfortable and private setting to hold discussions

What you discuss in performance management meetings should be confidential, so make sure that you're making your staff feel welcome, comfortable and at ease. If necessary, book a slot in a meeting room and make it clear that interruptions are unacceptable unless there's an emergency.

You definitely shouldn't be holding meetings of this nature on the shop floor, or with other members of staff in earshot. This might seem like common sense, but it's easier to overlook the details when you're running a busy business and trying to fit everything into your schedule.

Always agree on any action points

During the discussion, there'll be action points for your employee to take away. Even the highest performing staff will have priorities to work on, so they can continue to make a solid contribution and expand their skills, knowledge, and capabilities.

The key to success here is ensuring that the action points are agreed to. They shouldn't be simply thrust upon the individual without any discussion or agreement. Getting your staff onboard with the goals will make sure that they're committed to bringing them into fruition.

Make sure that goals and progress are regularly revisited and assessed

Performance management isn't just about holding a few meetings once a quarter. If you want to facilitate big improvements and exceptional progress, then you need to make sure that performance is something that is engrained in your business culture.

- Will your line managers check-in with their direct reports?
- Will they provide regular feedback?
- Will they collate information that helps them to build up a picture of how things are going?

These things can take time, for sure, but they're very worthy items on any manager's agenda.

Ask the individual to share their views and opinions

Some people think that a performance discussion simply involves the member of staff being 'talked at' for half an hour. This should never be the case. Always ask individuals to share their thoughts on how they've performed over the past quarter, and what they think they need to focus on in the near future.

You might unearth important information that you hadn't previously thought about and making it a two-way conversation shows your staff that you respect and value their contribution.

Welcome feedback on your own performance

You no doubt spend a decent amount of time thinking about how you can get the most out of your workforce. But have you stopped to think about how you're performing as a business owner? If you're not already doing so, think about how you might be able to collect meaningful and honest feedback from your members of staff. Being a good leader is an ongoing process, and you need to have continuous development on your list of priorities, always.

End discussions on a supportive and positive note

Often, there will be less than favourable feedback that needs to be delivered in performance discussions. It's essential that you and your managers are comfortable when it comes to handling the more negative aspects. Still though, it should never be all doom and gloom.

If improvements need to be made, then you need to make it clear that you aren't just 'telling your staff off'. They should leave the meeting feeling supported, and positive about the changes that they're going to make.

Keep your admin in order

Sometimes, admin can be overlooked. Surely, what's important here is that you're having conversations that inspire and motivate your staff and encourage them to do their best in their roles, but you also need to make sure that the paperwork is in order. Having full and accurate records is essential for continuity purposes, and it also ensures that you have documentation that backs up your decisions. It's worthwhile taking a look at your systems here and asking yourself whether they're the best they could possibly be.

If your performance management processes have some room for improvement, contact Becca on 07551 007591 or email becca.roberts@hrizon.co.uk

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Nine morale boosters that won't break the bank this Summer



Let's be totally honest here – when the sun is shining, most of us can easily think of dozens of things that we'd rather be doing than sitting at a computer in a stuffy office.

When we think about ways to give morale a boost, it can be tempting to fall into the trap of thinking that a big difference can't be made without splashing a whole load of cash.

And it's true that if you're serious about creating a positive workforce that really excels and gets things done, you can't ignore the fact that you're going to have to do some strategic work.

Pick a couple and get to work. You might be amazed by how much difference they can really make!

1. Say thank you

Think that boosting morale is about huge gestures and complicated initiatives? Think again. Never underestimate the value of thanking your staff for their contribution. This might seem like simple common sense, but it's something that's often overlooked in the busy day-to-day running of a business.

2. Work out what your staff really want

It's easy to jump to the assumption that a pay increase is what will really make the difference. Often though, this isn't actually the case. The best way to find out what your staff are looking for? It really couldn't be any simpler. Ask them. Formal staff surveys can be useful in many instances, but you don't have to make things any more complicated than they need to be. Next time you're catching up with your staff, ask questions about what they're currently dealing with, what their biggest challenges are, and how they think improvements could be made.

3. Team up with a local gym to provide complementary or subsidised fitness sessions for employees

At this time of year, many of us are thinking about how to improve our health and fitness. And of course, wellbeing is vital if staff are to make a solid contribution to the business. Consider how you could create a partnership with a local gym or fitness facility to kickstart a healthier lifestyle. Involvement should never be compulsory, so take into account personal preferences, and don't make staff feel obliged to get involved.

4. Encourage lunch breaks away from the desk

In many businesses, lunchtime involves a sandwich hastily eaten in front of the computer. This can decrease creativity, and leave your staff feeling lethargic. This week, ask your managers to lead by example by taking a lunchtime walk, or checking out a new local café and invite their staff to do the same.

5. Order treats for everyone

Everyone enjoys the occasional chocolate bar or maybe an ice cream when the temperatures are soaring. Get in touch with a local supplier and reward staff to a treat during their lunch break.

6. Let creativity shine through

Creativity is something which should be harnessed and encouraged in the workplace. So, what can you do to shake up day-to-day routines and inject some creative thinking? You could introduce creative activities into the canteen, bring in a karaoke machine, or encourage a little friendly competition with a prize for the most inspired new idea.

7. Introduce a short daily meeting

Email can be a wonderful tool for communication in the workplace, but there's no substitute for face-to-face discussion. Try holding brief informal meetings at the start of every day, so staff can get a feel for what everyone else is working on and be reminded that they're working towards a common purpose.

8. Take work outside

When the sun's shining, consider whether you could encourage staff to enjoy some outdoors working. Of course, you may have to tread carefully if your staff are handling sensitive documentation, but a little forward thinking can often go a long way. Don't write ideas off completely just because there may be some hurdles that will have to be overcome.

9. Support a local charity

There'll be causes that are close to your employees' hearts, for a variety of reasons. Think about how you can support charities and get your staff involved in some fundraising activities. From bake sales to sponsored walks, there are many options that you could pursue.

What next?

There's a huge amount of value that can be taken away from trialling and testing different initiatives to boost morale. Every business is different, so it's really important that you take an approach that works for you and gets the best possible results.

Of course, quick fixes can be really effective, but they should never be used to overcome problems that are more deeply rooted in a company's culture. If low morale is a serious problem and it's having an impact on your bottom line, then work needs to be done at a strategic level to make changes.

Businesses often go through stages in terms of how they engage their staff and keep them working towards their bigger vision, so if things aren't quite clicking the way you want them to be, the first step is to recognise that something has to change.

From here, you can start to look at what really needs to be done to move forward in the best possible way.

If you're concerned that low morale could become a serious problem, contact Becca on 07551 007591 or email becca.roberts@hrizon.co.uk

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