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Keys to Performance Enablement

Reimagining performance management to elevate people and accelerate business outcomes

The Changing Workforce: Embrace It or Get Left Behind

The way people work and their expectations of work have radically changed in the past few years. And now, we must reinvent the way we enable employee performance. It's no longer about 'managing' employees, but rather how to cultivate authentic and trusting relationships, remove bottlenecks, free employees to be their best, and help them build relevant skills and advance their careers.

Workforce transformation requires leveraging technology to create human-centric cultures that engage and empower employees to continuously achieve and grow as they align with your organization's strategic goals. Doing so creates a virtuous cycle of employee and business growth. This transformation is already underway, and there is no standing still. The only question is, "Will you lead or follow? Resilient businesses are forging ahead. They know what's at stake.

What Employees Want and Need from Employers

In the past, performance management was a top-down activity meant to evaluate, manage, and rank employees via a standardized process. But today, as people work across diverse teams and boundaries and as the complexity of problem-solving and the speed of change intensify, creativity and agility now drive performance. Leaders set the vision, but it is often the employees who determine how to breathe life into it.



What is Performance Enablement?

Performance enablement moves away from the outdated concepts of hierarchy and control present in performance management. Instead, it is based on a framework where employees' needs are at the center.

It gives employees the opportunity to create meaningful developmental and performance goals that align with their company's strategic goals and equips managers to frequently coach and enable employees — rather than dictate and evaluate. It is the engine that drives engagement, productivity, and greater employee satisfaction.

Today, employees expect to participate actively in their performance and career development. They want to synthesize these paths and set their own goals. In the highly matrixed and often hybrid/remote environment that many employees work in today, they need to collaborate across teams and functions efficiently and transparently.

To achieve their aspirations, people must align their goals with the goals of their team and the broader organization. Employees also require frequent communication and the agility to modify or change their course when needed.

To do this, people need tools, processes, and technology infrastructure to help them be empowered stakeholders and active participants in their own performance.

They need performance enablement.

Here are six steps you can take to implement a modern performance enablement system in your company.

1

Forge a Strategic Partnership to Expedite Change

2

Set – and Reset – Meaningful Employee and Business Goals

3

Provide Real-Time Feedback

4

Support Career Development and Performance Through Rich Conversations

5

Recognize Employee Achievements

6

Strengthen Your Managers

Forge a Strategic Partnership to Expedite Change

Realigning around performance enablement is a different way of thinking — one that puts employees' needs at the center and empowers their managers to guide, coach, and cheer them on. Successfully implementing real, systemic change requires a commitment to company-wide process adoption and change management.

This commitment starts with a partnership between the CEO and the HR leader, who serves as a strategic advisor. A great CHRO will know what's causing the issues the CEO doesn't know about. When a CHRO is interested in and passionate about the company and operates from a place where the company's vision is always front and

center, it creates an entirely different strategy that will help the enterprise thrive.

With this partnership, a successful performance enablement process should be a company-wide initiative with multiple internal champions. HR will support, train, and reinforce the new approach, but organizational leaders, including managers, play a vital role in enabling performance every day.

Above all, commit to providing the proper tools and ongoing training to support the workforce and ensure you evolve successfully.

The only way to remain competitive is to have a CHRO beside you who can help you empower your company's most important resource — people. The right HR leader in an organization can give you the competitive edge you need and be a game-changer.

Doug Dennerline | *Betterworks* CEO and co-author of *Make Work Better: Revolutionizing How Great Bosses Lead, Give Feedback, and Empower Employees*



Learn more about the book and **get your copy today!**





Best Practices:

1

CEOs should treat their HR leaders as strategic partners in the business who consult with and report directly to the CEO.

2

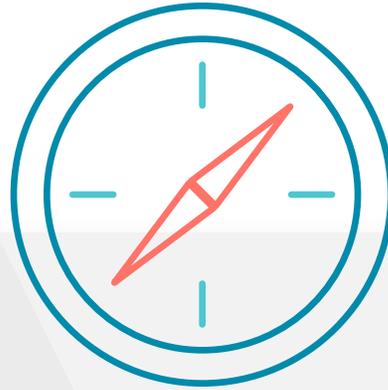
As a CEO, welcome being challenged by your CHRO. They are your eyes and ears. They know what's happening with employees and the culture in a way no one else does.

3

Work with an HR leader who can both conceive a strategy with big goals and tactically execute impactful programs. A leader who is both strategically minded and operationally focused is looking to solve big issues that impact the business.

4

Be analytics-focused and technology savvy.



Set – and Reset – Meaningful Employee and Business Goals

Agile goal-setting is the foundation of performance enablement. Individual goal-setting is a key driver of performance when aligned with team and company strategic objectives because it enables meaningful work, transparency, honesty, and accountability. Betterworks' 2022 State of Performance Enablement report found that nearly half of employees feel trapped by out-of-date or irrelevant goals. Employees with agile goal-setting are 13% more likely to stay with their companies.

When employees can take an active role in that process, they will be more engaged, productive, and successful.

Organizations should set business goals from the top and use a comprehensive road map to enable teams and individuals to best determine how to set their own goals in alignment with the business. And goals should be transparent across the organization. This is especially important now because visibility is more challenging in hybrid and remote work settings. Many employees also work in highly matrixed environments where they must understand how their activities impact other teams' and individuals' goals.



Betterworks has helped us see where we are in relation to our goals, to pressure ourselves to think differently, and to be honest with ourselves.

Monica Cabrera | *Manager of Corporate Strategy, Grupo Posadas*

Best Practices:

1

Allow employees and teams to set their own goals to align with business needs rather than cascade goals down from the top.

2

Enable employees to adjust goals to ensure alignment with shifting business needs.

3

Encourage employees to include growth and career development goals in their performance plans.

4

Use a goal-setting tool that employees can easily access in the flow of work — from the applications they use every day. When employees see how their work directly impacts business results, you will help them develop a sense of purpose, mastery, and autonomy.

There isn't one person in the world who improves and succeeds on their own in a vacuum. We all require feedback to learn what to improve and how to improve so that we can succeed.

Caitlin Collins | *Organizational Psychologist & Program Strategy Director, Betterworks*



Provide Real-Time Feedback

Solid feedback keeps performance strong across your organization and even elevates your culture. Feedback can be given to anyone by anyone in the organization for any reason. You should encourage peer-to-peer employee feedback and feedback between managers and employees.

Use this feedback in employee performance reviews. **Betterworks 2023 State of Performance Enablement** report shows that employees who get feedback from their team incorporated into performance reviews are 2-4.5x more likely to feel those reviews are unbiased.

According to recent **Gallup** research, when employees strongly agreed they had received “meaningful feedback” in the past week, they were nearly 4x more likely than other employees to be engaged.



Do feedback right:
**The Employee's
Ultimate Guide
to Giving and
Receiving Feedback**



Employees who get feedback from their team in performance reviews are 2–4.5x more likely to feel those reviews are unbiased.

Employees who see reviews as very fair and equitable

50%

When team feedback is **received and used in reviews**

19%

When team feedback is received **but not used** in reviews

11%

When **no team feedback** is received

10% 20% 30% 40%

Not shown: "I don't know."

Source: Betterworks 2023 State of Performance Enablement report

Best Practices:

1

Good feedback will always be clear, specific, lightweight, continuous, and timely — given as close to the event as possible.

2

Learning how to give good feedback takes practice. Provide technology, templates, and processes to support sharing feedback and to build muscle memory for requesting, giving, and acting upon feedback. Templates allow you to document feedback for review and performance evaluations.

3

Good feedback should include praise for employee strengths and suggestions for improving weaknesses.

4

The ideal ratio of praise to constructive critique is 5:1. Avoid mixing the two in a "praise sandwich," which can lead to mixed messages and ineffective outcomes.

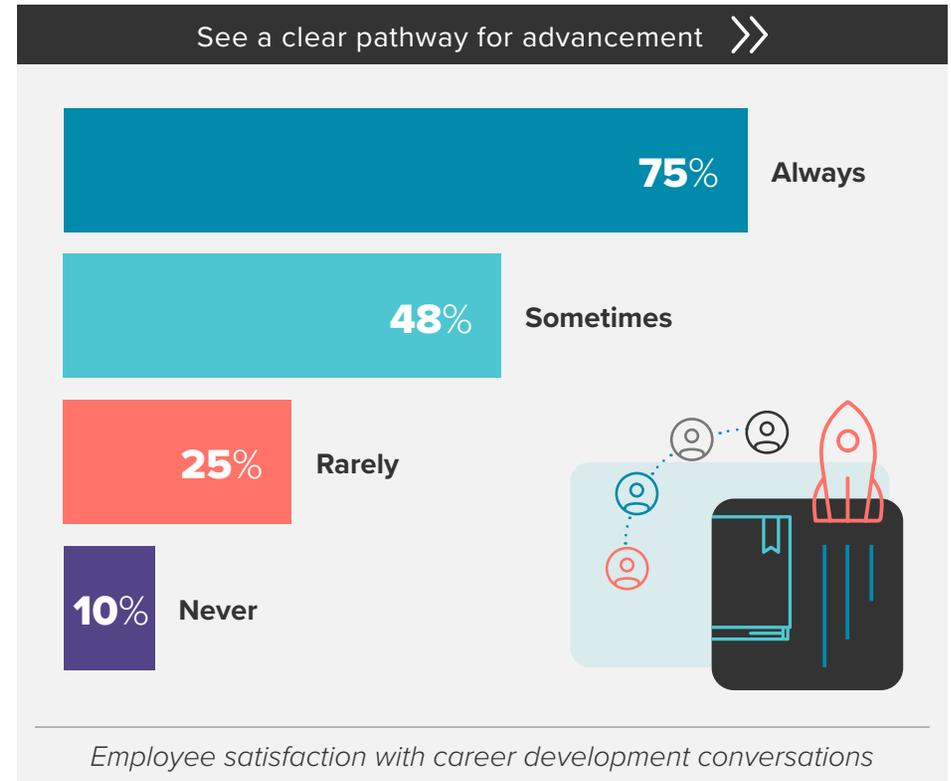
Support Career Development and Performance Through Rich Conversations

Companies can miss out when focusing primarily on high performers. If you want to shift your performance and retention bell curve to the right, invest in all your employees through rich and frequent 1:1 conversations between managers and their employees.

Managers who talk frequently with their employees about performance and professional growth build stronger relationships and greater trust and transparency. Employees who are always satisfied with conversations about career development are 28% more engaged (75% vs. 47%) and 24% more productive (82% vs. 58%) than those who are dissatisfied according to our research. Frequent 1:1s also enable managers to help employees improve performance by providing guidance on goal alignment, removing bottlenecks, and problem-solving.

Managers who remain in step with their reports will be equally focused on coaching employees to expand their skills, leverage their talents, and advance their careers.

Employees are **7.5x more likely to see a path to advance** internally when they're always satisfied with career development check-ins



Source: Betterworks 2023 State of Performance Enablement report



Discover more insights:
Betterworks' 2023 State of Performance Enablement report

Within a year we were seeing over 70% participation in check-ins, something we've never seen before. We've seen employees stay tightly connected with their leaders over this past year, which has led to greater success for the teams overall.

Jeff Andes | *Vice President of Talent Management, University of Phoenix*



Best Practices:

1

An ideal manager-employee check-in frequency is once a week or every other week.

2

Managers should work with employees to identify the skills they need and align learning goals with business needs and employees' long-term career goals.

3

Encourage employees to build development goals into the performance plan and have managers work with their employees to track progress and maintain momentum.

4

Use software templates to document conversations. This will help both parties create clear expectations, stay on topic, pay attention to performance *and* development, and provide better insights for performance evaluations.



Recognize Employee Achievements

Recognition promotes teamwork, collaboration, and cultural values. When it comes to the impact of recognition on your employees, the data doesn't lie. Employees are 4X as likely to be engaged and 5X as likely to feel connected to their culture and see a path for growth in their organization when recognition "hits the mark," according to [Gallup](#). It can also significantly reduce turnover.

Recognition clearly produces strategic value for companies. Yet, Gallup says 40% of employees report receiving recognition only a few times a year or less. When team members complete tasks that drive the business forward or expand their abilities, it's vital to have systems that acknowledge and record those milestones. Good employee enablement will have an active framework for giving and receiving positive reinforcement. When recognition is part of a comprehensive approach that includes goals, conversations, and feedback, goal progress increases 30% according to Betterworks' 2022 State of Performance Enablement report.

Unfortunately, recognition doesn't come easily to all managers, so establishing a formal recognition process is critical.

The recognition component of Betterworks has enabled democratized feedback. And so people are getting really nice feedback from their peers and from people all around the organization.

Helen Sedcole | *Chief People Officer, Z Energy*





Best Practices:

1

Give everyone in the company the opportunity to provide recognition by using tools that make it easier to offer, and encourage regular practice.

2

Amplify recognition. Make it visible company-wide and in the flow of work through an integration with a messaging app such as Slack or Teams. Hashtag the company values shown by the recipients.

3

Make recognition frequent and specific.

4

Develop training courses to help managers practice interpersonal skills to provide 1:1 recognition.



Strengthen Your Managers

Managers are the linchpin that holds your organization together. Yet, a recent [survey by the Workforce Institute at UKG](#) reveals that 46% of middle managers globally are likely to quit their jobs soon due to stress. The Betterworks 2023 State of Enablement report shows that employees trust their managers most (63%), so the entire organization suffers when managers struggle.

Organizations often promote people into management because they are high-performing. But, this doesn't necessarily mean they possess the relational and softer skills needed to coach and enable employees. The

manager's role is also more complex in hybrid and remote work environments.

Managers need more organizational resources: 46% don't feel confident coaching employees for career development and 38% want assistance in helping employees develop skills and career paths according to our research. Your managers may need help to improve their ability to provide feedback and evaluate employees' performance. To accomplish this, managers — especially first-time ones — need training and tools that provide visibility into the activities and progress of their teams.

We believe in promoting what we call 'purpose-driven' and impactful discussions between managers and their direct reports. This kind of trust-building and open, honest communication with managers is essential.

Jamie Aitken | *VP of HR Transformation, Betterworks*



Where managers **want HR's help:**



Source: Betterworks 2023 State of Performance Enablement report

Help your managers: **6 Steps to Strengthening Your Managers**



Step-by-step guide to better connection, alignment, and retention:
The Manager's Ultimate Guide to Great Conversations

Best Practices:

1

Go deep with manager training.

2

Ask your managers what resources and tools they require and develop a menu of support options.

3

Encourage managers to have frequent and regular 1:1 check-ins with their employees to discuss goal progress and career development, troubleshoot, and offer feedback. Discuss professional growth at least once per quarter.

4

Provide templates for conversations and feedback that managers can leverage to guide and document their conversations with employees.

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Discover Betterworks

Companies like Colgate-Palmolive, Intuit, Freddie Mac, and Udemy rely on Betterworks as their performance management infrastructure — enabling great performance through dedicated people technology.

Betterworks' best-in-class HR talent management solutions are designed to drive exceptional performance by putting employee experience at the heart of how companies align, motivate, retain, and develop their people. Unlike legacy HR technology, Betterworks is a lightweight, enterprise-ready solution that integrates with the tools employees use every day.



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