
Train and support staff who implement HR processes

Overview

Support and training for the people who implement HR processes is critical – the best procedures are meaningless unless people have the knowledge, skills and commitment to implement them. That includes line managers, team leaders, external HR service providers and internal HR officers.

This learning resource outlines training and support needs you should consider as the HR Manager, methods for identify these needs, and methods and tools for providing training and support.



Key terms

Coaching

A form on on-the-job training, usually in a one-to-one situation; may be an action in an individual learning plan.

Mentoring

A form of coaching by role modelling; usually less structured than coaching and occurring over a longer period of time.

Performance gap

The difference between required performance and actual performance; may be further analysed by a knowledge gap analysis, or a skills gap analysis.

Performance management

A process for creating a shared understanding of what an individual is to achieve and managing and developing individuals to achieve in both the short and longer term.

Training needs analysis

TNA; a formal process of identifying training needs, usually in term of a group of people and/or for a process.

Who do you need to support?

Training and ongoing support will be needed for a range of people involved in HR processes:

- HR service providers, both external consultants and internal HR officers
- specialists in your organisation, such as the OH&S coordinator or the union representative where they are key players in an HR process, eg industrial negotiations or inducting new employees
- line managers and team leaders, as the clients of HR processes.

Whoever it is, your approach as the HR Manager should always be to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place. Don't assume that formal training is needed if you notice a performance gap.

Identifying support needs

The following table outlines possible skills and knowledge that may be required by line managers, team leaders, external HR providers and internal HR staff across several HR service areas.

Table 1: HR training & support needs (4 cols)

<i>HR service area</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Knowledge of legal requirements</i>	<i>Knowledge of organisational policies</i>
Management of HR consultancy services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stakeholder consultation skills• process evaluation skills• presentation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• knowledge of relevant Awards & Workplace Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• knowledge among HR service providers of organisation's strategic goals and priorities

<i>HR service area</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Knowledge of legal requirements</i>	<i>Knowledge of organisational policies</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active listening 		
Management of performance management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance counselling • active listening • non-verbal communication • goal setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of EEO & anti-discrimination laws • knowledge of unfair dismissal laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of organisational performance management processes & tools
Management of industrial relations processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negotiation • conflict resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of relevant Awards & Workplace Agreements • knowledge of unfair dismissal laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of dispute resolution procedures
Management of recruitment & selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interviewing • questioning • non-verbal communication • assessment of candidates against criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoiding discriminatory questions • knowledge of EEO & anti-discrimination laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of job descriptions & person specifications • knowledge of interview protocol • knowledge of job offer process
Management of induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation skills • small group training skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of information that employer is legally bound to provide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of key documentation to be signed on commencement
Management of work/life skills programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation skills • project management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of work/life program provision in relevant Awards or Workplace Agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of policies for flexible working arrangements

Identifying performance gaps

A performance gap exists when an HR service provider, a line manager or a team leader does not implement an HR process to the standard required.

You may spot a performance gap in a number of ways:

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- reports from the HRMIS identify a pattern, eg there is an unacceptably long time period between when selection decisions are made and when candidates are notified the result of the selection decision
 - a complaint comes to your attention about an HR process, eg a job applicant alleges they were discriminated against
 - evidence of an HR matter is not kept, eg a line manager wishes to dismiss an employee with a pattern of misconduct, but cannot produce records of performance counselling or warnings.

Training's not always the answer

Correcting these performance gaps may involve action at several levels, and not all of these require training:

- the strategic level – are changes to HR policies or processes needed, or is an organisation wide training program needed?
- the operational level – are the people who implement these processes supported with adequate resources?
- the individual level – do the people who implement these processes require training, coaching, mentoring or other support?



Think

Consider this scenario. You have contacted line managers involved in a recruitment event, your purpose is to organise a teleconference so you can update them on the recruitment event and hear any concerns they have about the process. Most are keen to touch base with you, but one of them replies with this voicemail message:

This is Len from the plant in WA. You wanted to organise a teleconference but we're under big pressure here. People are away with the flu, and production targets are higher this month.

We need those extra people right now, and I know a couple of likely lads who I could put on today if we didn't have to go through those complex and confusing HR procedures.

Not having a permanent shift supervisor is adding to the pressure. What are you head office people doing anyway?

Is the issue here mainly a strategic, operational or individual support issue? What actions might you take as the HR Manager?

If you thought this is mainly an individual support issue you'd be right. Consider the actions you could take by looking at the support methods and tools listed in the tables below.

Reasons for performance gaps

There are many underlying reasons for poor work performance. They include the following and more:

- lack of communication
- interpersonal conflict
- job mismatch
- role confusion
- lack of skills
- ineffective management
- unsuitable organisational culture
- inappropriate organisational structure
- too much change
- poor work ethic
- stress
- insufficient pay
- overwork
- harsh or unsafe working condition
- unclear objectives
- absence of standards
- intimidation
- lack of support.



Think

Identify some cases of under-performance, sub-standard performance and non-compliant performance by someone who implements HR processes (do not identify people). What could be the reasons behind this?

There are two approaches you can use to identify specific training needs for groups or individuals:

- conduct a **training needs analysis** across the organisation – useful where a new process is implemented or a performance gap has been identified across the organisation
- develop a **learning plan** with an individual – useful where a performance gap relates to the performance of an individual, or where a new person has entered a job.

Either of these two approaches may lead to any of the training methods outlined below.



Read

Dessler, Griffiths, Lloyd-Walker, Williams, **Human Resource Management**, 1st ed, 1999 – see Ch 8 on training needs analysis and training methods

Nankervis, Compton & Baird **Strategic Human Resource Management**, 4th ed, 2002 – see Ch 9 on training needs analysis and training methods

Training and support methods and tools

Training and support methods

Before you start organising training sessions, consider simple things you can do to give people the support they need. This table is organised from the more simple to the more complex (and often more costly).

Table 2: Training and support methods and examples of their uses (2 cols)

<i>Method</i>	<i>Example of use</i>
Develop and distribute clear HR procedures documents	<p>It's often very simple things that can prevent many problems from occurring in the first place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• policy and procedure manuals that are written in plain English• HR forms that are clear and easy to use• manuals and forms that are kept up-to-date• manuals and forms that are easily located by all people who need to use them, HR staff, line managers and external consultants

<i>Method</i>	<i>Example of use</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manuals can have at the front quick reference cards for things like who to contact if you need support, or who's who in the HR area, or FAQs (frequently asked questions).
On the job coaching	<p>Often you can delegate this to an HR officer to show somebody:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how to use an HRMIS application how to update a job description how to interpret a person specification planning for a performance counselling session
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new line manager is mentored over a period of time in HR processes by a more experienced person a new HR staff member is mentored over a period of time by a more experienced staff member
Ongoing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when HR processes are in progress listen to what line managers & HR officers have to say about the processes provide advice to line managers & HR officers on difficult decisions and issues be sure line managers & HR officers have appropriate assistance and resources when implementing an HR process line managers & HR officers have access to immediate support (eg by phone or email) when they have questions about an HR process
Training session conducted by internal provider	<p>Use when expertise and resources exist inside the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> training in internal processes such as procedure for salary review training in interviewing skills training in making the selection decision training in performance management techniques training in mentoring
Training session conducted by external provider	<p>Use when you need to bring a specialist knowledge or skill into the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> training in conflict resolution & negotiation in industrial relations setting training in implementation of a work/life program training in implementation of a new HRMIS

<i>Method</i>	<i>Example of use</i>
	application
Computer-based learning (group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> group problem solving (via private discussion board) of an industrial relations or performance management case study
Computer-based learning (individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge tutorials of key legislative requirements and internal processes knowledge quizzes of key legislative requirements and internal processes

Coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring is undertaken by competent individuals in the workplace, who have the ability to motivate individuals from where they are, to where they need to be to perform their jobs. There are a number of reasons for using coaching and mentoring. Each addresses new or emerging job needs, as well as updating knowledge, skills or behaviours specific to the job. Coaches and mentors work with individuals to provide practical, on-the-job experience and guidance.

Coaching is more structured than mentoring, and is used for on-the-job training, whereas mentoring is used to guide, and expands on the current abilities of a person.

Mentoring is coaching by role modelling. The mentor is a person who is experienced in performance feedback; they act as a role model for the trainee over a period of time. Mentoring is useful when a person has some knowledge and experience in feedback situations, but possibly needs to apply it to performance feedback in the particular organisation or functional area.



Think

Identify opportunities for coaching and mentoring in your workplace.

Identify a person, or a number of people, in your own workplace who would benefit from being coached or mentored.

coaching

mentoring

Training and support tools

Table 2 started with a list of the most obvious support tool – clear, up-to-date and easily accessed HR policy and procedures documents. Here are some more tools.

Table 3: Training and support tools and examples of their uses (2 cols)

<i>Tool</i>	<i>Example of use</i>
Checklists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• checklist for performance counselling session• checklist for induction
Flowcharts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• procedure for placing job ads• procedure for making job offers• procedure for reporting an injury in the workplace
Job aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• example of a completed performance appraisal form• list of questions that are not allowed in job interviews• pro-forma plan for a one-one training session• pro-forma plan for a mentoring relationship
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• model a skill such as performance counselling conflict resolution, negotiation or interviewing



Think

How could you improve support mechanisms in your organisation?

Consider:

- how clear and accessible are your HR procedures?
- how up-to-date and accurate are they?
- are HR forms clear and easy to use
- do line managers and other know who to contact if they have a query?

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