



Beyond perfection

Clive Wilson, Managing Director

In previous editions of PV we have identified numerous similarities between music and business. Early editions likened leadership to conducting an orchestra or to singing in harmony. Earlier this month our good friend and ace innovator Alisdair Wiseman identified that his most successful interventions for clients were completely unstructured. With a structured plan, one could argue that the best you can achieve is perfection. With no structure, there actually is no limit. This reminded me of the happiest day of 2002 for me when my thirteen year-old daughter played an improvisation on the theme of Christmas day on her flute. It was sheer magic – and better than anything that could have been played from a script. For me it was beyond perfection – but I am her Dad!

The question for readers is whether you can recall times when you or your people forgot the business plan for a moment and performed beyond perfection. If you can, then what must you do to repeat the conditions? I've promised to tell the whole story of the Christmas flute for Alisdair's e-mag. So if anyone's interested, let me know.



Primeast has been helping clients to make the most of a changing world since 1986.

This month it gives me great delight to welcome a feature from John Oldham. If his thoughts on competency strike a chord, let me know and I'll put you in touch.

Happy Easter!

Confidence with Competence

John Oldham, HR & Training Associate



Readers will be familiar with competencies and may indeed have a competency framework in place for their businesses. The aim of this text is to challenge whether strategic benefits are being gained in tandem with motivational benefits for the individuals being developed.

Competencies must equate to business goals

The strategic aim of the competency framework is to translate business goals into generic and specific job competencies that enable a link between business needs and performance needs. The framework is the focal point of the competency process and the competencies themselves need to be current, specific, clearly written, challenging, realistic and punchy to ensure success.

Managers should help individuals translate competencies into personal behaviours

Once generic competencies have been written, specific desired behaviours and other outcomes should be described, in consultation with individuals, to help everyone to achieve the business goal. Having a uniform approach to performance at the corporate level should not discourage personality and creativity in individuals. The behaviours outlined should indicate what underpinning individual knowledge, skills and personal qualities are needed to ensure success. If written correctly they provide impetus for all to achieve excellent performance. They should be seen (and sold) as helping provide the individual with greater opportunity.

Personal behaviours, by their very nature, should not be handed down to the employee from on high. They are something in which the individual can actively participate in and help develop. They need encouragement to track their own progress against the relevant generic and specific competencies. Managers should involve the individual in ensuring greater understanding and commitment on what action needs to be taken to meet the goals of the business.

Indeed, the manager's role is one of mentor and coach. They must help their people understand where the business is heading and what they themselves need to do to move forward and develop in line with what the future demands. In this way a development contract can be drawn up between the manager and the learner with specific outcomes agreed and established.

Training professionals facilitate the process

The training professional should never take over the manager's ownership of the process from a business perspective. That would be a significant step towards failure. The training professional acts as a facilitator, often providing a framework to use in the first place. They should provide ongoing advice on the best learning method to maximise improvement in competence, taking into account the needs of the individual to ensure the desired development takes place.

A focus for personal development and performance management

When used well, a competency framework can facilitate the whole human resource cycle from recruitment, through development to performance and appraisal. It can even help with outplacement once an individual moves beyond the organisation. It should act as a major driver for the business and the individual. It also provides an opportunity for managers and their people to take the driving seat as far as development is concerned. They can ensure that development is relevant to business and individual needs – a true partnership approach.