



Performance Management in a Fire Service



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Tasmania Fire Service



The Tasmania Fire Service

- **Career and volunteer**
- **470 paid employees**
 - 320 fire fighters
 - 150 support staff
- **4800 volunteers**
- **230 brigades**
 - 4 career/ urban
- **Wide variety of work places and functions**

Origins

- **1980's**: Performance Appraisal adopted
- mixed success, low trust, scrapped
- **1998**: Employees & managers wanted performance feedback - Corporate Plan
- **1999**: Included in EBA
- **2001**: PM a State Service requirement
- Increasing internal demand for feedback

The Challenges

- 'Performance Appraisal' history
- Variety of work functions & groups
- Lack of confidence/ skill
- Tradition of hierarchy
- Lack of trust
- Cynicism

The Intent

- To give staff timely feedback about how they are performing
- To get staff talking about issues effectively
- To provide staff with the skills and confidence to do it
- To provide staff with the development they need

(Note: no mention of 'rating')

The Needs

1. A system that is effective
2. A system that is accepted by people
3. A system that people will use
4. People actually using the system
(and the skills)
5. Strong links to other systems, e.g.
Learning & Development,
Performance Improvement

To Create an Effective System



Involve staff in developing it



Clearly define organisation's aims



Trial it



Adjust it

Identify and
communicate
the benefits



Address
fears and
barriers



Develop
'champions'

To Create Acceptance





To Create a System That People Will Use

Emphasise conversations,
not judgements



Ensure confidentiality



Encourage people to
evaluate themselves



Enable people to provide
feedback to their supervisor

To Create a System That People Will Use



- ❖ **Keep it light & flexible**
- ❖ **Separate it from pay, promotions and discipline**
- ❖ **Ensure that it leads to development for staff !!!**

'Workplace Feedback System'

Principles

- General feedback (day to day)
- Summary Meetings (1-2 per year)
- No surprises
- Two way (*all* levels)
- Confidential
- No links to pay, promotion, discipline
- Fair & transparent

To Get People to Use the System

Develop skills and confidence



**Clarify expectations and
accountability**



***Show* senior management
supporting and using the system**



Build reporting into the system



Follow up if it's not happening



What Did We Learn?

- Staff value transparency
- Staff like being heard
- Staff have valuable ideas/ experience
- Build in accountability
- Communicate face to face
- Keep the momentum going
- Commit resources – a dedicated driver

What Next?

Implement it!

- Set up trainers/ coaches/ regional reps
- Roll out by work groups
- Use it soon after training (with coaching)
- Provide ongoing support

Then Evaluate It

- After one year (& ongoing)

A Firefighter's Perspective



Summary: Essential Elements

1. Executive Management commitment
2. Internal consultation
3. External advice
4. Sufficient resources
5. Trial & independent evaluation
6. Ongoing communication
7. Training & coaching for all staff
8. Ongoing support

Questions/ comments?



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