

Author: Utecht, Jennifer L.

Title: *Exploring Performance Development: Perspective from Colleagues of a Not for Profit Organization*

The accompanying research report is submitted to the **University of Wisconsin-Stout, Graduate School** in partial completion of the requirements for the

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Degree/Training and HRD

Research Advisor: Richard Herling

Submission Term/Year: Summer 2018

Number of Pages: 36

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 6th edition

- I have adhered to the Graduate School Research Guide and have proofread my work.
- I understand that this research report must be officially approved by the Graduate School. **Additionally, by signing and submitting this form, I (the author(s) or copyright owner) grant the University of Wisconsin-Stout the non-exclusive right to reproduce, translate, and/or distribute this submission (including abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video. If my research includes proprietary information, an agreement has been made between myself, the company, and the University to submit a thesis that meets course-specific learning outcomes and CAN be published. There will be no exceptions to this permission.**
- I attest that the research report is my original work (that any copyrightable materials have been used with the permission of the original authors), and as such, it is automatically protected by the laws, rules, and regulations of the U.S. Copyright Office.
- My research advisor has approved the content and quality of this paper.

STUDENT:

NAME: Jennifer Utecht **DATE:** 7/25/2018

ADVISOR: (Committee Chair if MS Plan A or EdS Thesis or Field Project/Problem):

NAME: Richard Herling **DATE:** 7/25/2018

This section for MS Plan A Thesis or EdS Thesis/Field Project papers only

Committee members (other than your advisor who is listed in the section above)

1. CMTE MEMBER'S NAME: **DATE:**
2. CMTE MEMBER'S NAME: **DATE:**
3. CMTE MEMBER'S NAME: **DATE:**

This section to be completed by the Graduate School

This final research report has been approved by the Graduate School.

Director, Office of Graduate Studies:

DATE:

Utecht, Jennifer L. *Exploring Performance Development: Perspective from Colleagues of a Not for Profit Organization*

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to collect and analyze feedback from colleagues from Company XYZ regarding their previous experiences and opinions of performance management and employee development programs. A literature review was conducted to analyze performance management and employee development. Focus groups were conducted and themes were extracted from the feedback gathered at the focus group sessions.

Acknowledgments

I would like to first thank my family, Ryan, Lucas, Lori and Tod. Without their endless support, I would not have been able to accomplish this project. Thank you to Dr. Richard Herling for being my advisor. Thank you to my peers who experienced this program with me. Thank you to Michelle and Kate for being my mentors and pushing me to be a better version of myself.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....2

Chapter I: Introduction.....6

 Statement of the Problem.....8

 Purpose of the Study8

 Assumptions of the Study9

Chapter II: Literature Review10

 Performance Management10

 Importance of Performance Management..... 10

 Elements of Performance Management 11

 Employee Performance Development13

 Importance of Employee Development 14

 Elements of Employee Performance Development 14

 Implementing Performance Development Programs.....17

 Steps in the Implementation Process 17

 Ways to Increase Implementation Success 20

Chapter III: Methodology21

 Methodology.....21

 Subject Selection and Description21

 Instrumentation22

 Data Collection Procedures.....22

 Before the Session..... 23

 During the Session 23

After the Session	23
Data Analysis	24
Chapter IV: Results.....	25
Item Analysis	25
Chapter V: Conclusion and Recommendation.....	29
Conclusions.....	29
Limitations	30
Recommendations.....	30
References.....	31
Appendix A: Your Voice Forum Invitation.....	33
Appendix B: Your Voice Forum Research Instrument.....	34

Chapter I: Introduction

Company XYZ is a not for profit publicly funded managed care organization in the Midwest which serves nearly 15,000 members. There are approximately 1,050 employees of Company XYZ, referred to as colleagues linked to 36 office locations; some colleagues work remotely from their homes while others work in Company XYZ offices. In 2016, three organizations planned and executed a merger and Company XYZ is the organization that was created because of that merger. The three organizations that were merged are referred to as the “legacy” organizations.

The merger was very quickly executed, and that rapid execution led to many processes, procedures and systems not being unified prior to merge, and the already unstable culture resulting from the merge had been negatively impacted by a lack of unified practices. Because legacy practices were still being used, some colleagues from legacy organizations still identified with their legacy organization. Even now, many processes, procedures and systems still operate using three different legacy practices.

This use of multiple practices created inefficiencies and uncertainty throughout the company. For the first year after merge, the organization prioritized and unified a few major systems and processes including the human resources information system, payroll, recruitment and employment model. For the second year, major projects being unified are the business system which houses member records, divisional reorganizations, provider contracting and rate unification. While those transitions were in full swing, the organization embarked on another project of the unification of the performance development process.

Performance development is one component of the employee experience, and Company XYZ believes unifying this process is critical. For Company XYZ, performance development

consists of two elements, performance management and employee development. Each legacy organization had its own model for performance management and employee development and Company XYZ did not adopt any one of those models at the time of the merge. Instead of adopting a legacy model, Company XYZ made a strategic decision to develop a new model. The absence of a single, company-wide model had resulted in confusion, frustration, and inconsistency for both leaders and colleagues.

When the companies merged, the human resources division was rebranded to Talent, Learning and Culture (TLC). The TLC Division was responsible for leading the organization through the implementation of a new performance management and development program. Members of the TLC Division have experience leading large scale organizational change initiatives, and have the subject matter expertise to create a new performance management and development program. With this combined experience, TLC team members understood the need to engage colleagues in organizational change initiatives.

The combination of the needs for a new performance development program and involving colleagues in the creation of the program had created an opportunity to partner with colleagues and gather data about their past experiences with performance management and employee development and their hopes for the future program for Company XYZ.

Company XYZ was innovative in its approach to creating a new performance development system by seeking input from the colleagues early in the development process. Company XYZ realized that times have changed regarding performance management and employee development. “Gone are the days when performance management meant using a somewhat static annual process, focusing solely on supervisor-subordinate pairs with little input

from others, and relying on complex and likely invalid rating processes in an often feedback-poor environment (Dorsey & Mueller-Hanson, 2017, p. 37)

Statement of the Problem

Following the merger, there was no unified performance management and employee development system at Company XYZ which resulted in in confusion, frustration, and inconsistency for both leaders and colleagues of Company XYZ, which further contributed to the current cultural instability related to the recent merger and a lack of unified processes. Because each of the three legacy companies had different philosophies and approaches to performance management, and because performance management was considered to be a critical process that needed to be adopted by all groups quickly, it was decided that a completely new performance management model needed to be developed rather than imposing one existing model upon the other two legacy member organizations. Without an understanding of the common needs and beliefs of the three legacy companies regarding performance management, and what the differences were, the successful implementation of a new model, accepted by all, would be in question.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to collect and analyze feedback from colleagues of each legacy company regarding their previous experiences and opinions of performance management and employee development programs, with the expectation that this data could be used to make recommendations for a new performance development program created for Company XYZ.

The question this study attempted to answer was:

Regarding performance management systems and employee development practices,, what are the experiences and opinions of the colleagues of Company XYZ?

To assist in answering this question the following sub-questions were used to help guide the study:

- Sub-Question 1: What have been the personal experiences, positive and negative, of the colleagues of Company XYZ regarding performance management systems, and their related opinions, either favorable or unfavorable, of same.
- Sub-question 2: How do the colleagues of Company XYZ describe a successful performance management system.
- Sub-question 3: How do the colleagues of Company XYZ define the roles of both colleagues and leaders in a performance management system.
- Sub-question 4: What have been the personal experiences, positive and negative, of the colleagues of Company XYZ regarding employee development practices.

Assumptions of the Study

There are two assumptions for the study. The first is that the individuals participating in the study have a varied set of experiences with several different performance management systems and the second is that individuals participating will not be negatively biased by their personal experiences and outcome of the legacy merger.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Company XYZ did not have a performance management and employee development system which resulted in in confusion, frustration, and inconsistency for both leaders and colleagues. The following is a review of literature on topics related to performance management, employee development, and organizational change initiatives.

Performance Management

One way performance management is described is as “an ongoing process of communication between a supervisor and an employee that occurs throughout the year, in support of accomplishing the strategic objectives of the organization” (UC Berkeley, n.d., para. 1). In close comparison, another description is performance management as “a process by which managers and employees work together to plan, monitor and review an employee’s work objectives and overall contribution to the organization” (HR Council, n.d., para. 1). Performance management is more than just a point in time event, performance management is a process. Also, there is a clear distinction that the process includes both supervisors and employees.

Importance of performance management. There is a relationship between performance management and change management (Ashdown, 2014). Employees need to work in an environment where they are aware of organizational goals and initiatives and how their roles and expectations align with those goals and initiatives. An operative performance management process would provide information to employees that would allow them to know that they are “focused on the right things” and “carrying out their roles in the best way possible” (Ashdown, 2014, p. 21). Not only does performance management ensure that employees are effective and efficient in the organization’s current state, it allows employees to be proactive and identify prospects for change. One way that performance management can support a proactive

approach is ensuring that employees have a clear understanding of the organization's goals, current operations and health. This understanding will allow employees to "see beyond their role" to find proactive ways to grow and contribute (Ashdown, 2014, p. 23). An environment where employees have the opportunity to explore additional skills and behaviors is also proactive because it does not limit employees to a current state. Another proactive approach is an environment where employees are given feedback as a way to encourage growth and development instead of as a way to blame employees for potential performance issues (Ashdown, 2014).

A proper performance management system requires resources to properly implement, it can have a positive return on investment for the organization (UC Berkeley, n.d.). Performance management benefits companies as it serves as a motivational tool to help employees achieve success within the organization by aligning the employee's performance with the company's goals. At the individual employee level, each employee knows what their role is and how he or she contributes to the organization. At the department level, team members are able to focus activities related to their work and remove any activities that are no longer aligned with organizational goals. Continual feedback allows employees to identify and correct potential issues early (UC Berkeley, n.d.). There are many benefits to having an effective performance management system. These benefits are for both the organization as a whole and the employees of the organization.

Elements of performance management. Performance management has evolved over time "from a 'controlling' activity to one of partnership, where employer and employee share responsibility for delivering required levels of performance" (Ashdown, 2014, p.10). There are two different approaches to performance management. The first approach to performance

management is one based on performance standards. In this approach, standards are identified, and supervisors are responsible for notifying employees when standards are not being met. The supervisors and employees then identify ways to increase performance. The second approach is one based on excellence. In this approach, employees are encouraged to be continuously growing and developing to achieve a high level of performance (Ashdown, 2014).

Performance management is a cycle and is not “an isolated event, focused in an annual performance review” (UC Berkeley, n.d., para. 2). The cycle includes three stages planning, checking in, and review. The planning stage involves a meeting with employee and supervisor. At this meeting, there is an in-depth review of inclusive performance expectations and employee performance goals. The review may include objectives, standards, and/or performance dimensions (UC Berkeley, n.d.). The employee expectations and goals identified and reviewed during the planning stage are aligned with the organization’s mission and objectives. The second stage is check in. This stage involves multiple meetings with the employee and supervisor throughout the year. These check in meetings include updates, coaching, and feedback (UC Berkeley, n.d.). The third and final stage is review. The review stage is a comprehensive review meeting between a supervisor and manager where the employee’s total performance over the year is compared to the original performance objectives and goals which were created in the planning stage; this is done by reviewing the notes from all of the check in meetings that occurred during the year. This stage then morphs into the planning stage for the next year (UC Berkeley, n.d.).

A similar four – stage cycle includes planning, action, monitoring, and review. The first stage, planning, is a collaboration between a supervisor and an employee where performance objectives are articulated. Beyond the definition, the objectives are agreed to by all stakeholders

and associated timelines are created. Employee involvement at this stage is crucial to gain employee input, buy in, and commitment to the process. The second stage is the action stage, this is where the employee is actually performing his or her work. During this stage the supervisor is providing feedback about performance and support to the employee as needed. The third stage is monitoring and, in this stage, the supervisor is monitoring the employee's performance compared to the objectives identified during the first stage of the cycle. The supervisor is not only monitoring performance for gaps, but also for strengths. This more comprehensive monitoring will lead to more feedback and development opportunities (Ashdown, 2014). The fourth stage, review, is both informal review of performance and a more formal review that may be linked to compensation changes. The goals of these reviews are to discuss performance related to agreed upon expectations and the associated action steps as well as, feedback from the employee to the supervisor regarding their level of support (Ashdown, 2014).

Employee Performance Development

There are multiple ways that performance development is defined. One way to look at performance development is as “an ongoing process that involves both the employee and their supervisor, and one that focuses on the development of the employee as a professional over time” (Williams College, n.d., para. 1). Another view of performance development is an “active partnership” between stakeholders that enables employees “to be fully engaged and reach their full potential” (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, n.d., para. 1). A third definition of performance development is “the ongoing process between supervisor and employee of communicating and clarifying position responsibilities, priorities and performance expectations to guarantee mutual understanding and to enhance effectiveness in achieving the campus and departmental mission and goals” (Indiana University Southeast, n.d., para. 1).

Importance of employee development. Performance development is intended to make employees the best versions of themselves (Williams College, n.d.). Multiple stakeholders can benefit from a performance development program. Benefits could include increased performance for employees resulting in organizational increased performance, increased job satisfaction, and better retention (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, n.d.). Employee development should be emphasized in order for organizations to remain competitive in the labor market, provide a solution to deal with skill gaps, increase productivity, adapt to organizational changes, increase retention align employee development strategy with organizational strategy (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015).

Elements of employee performance development. There are multiple ways to provide development opportunities to employees. Some ways focus on offering opportunities for growth in the employee's current role. These opportunities may include an increase in responsibilities, new goals or outcomes, and recognizing knowledge or skills to develop (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, n.d.). Other ways focus on employees' possible future advancement. This could include forward thinking activities and goal setting beyond the employee's current level of responsibility and area of the organization. The third area of focus could be enhancing employee engagement. This includes offering employees a supportive work environment, opportunities for coaching, individualized efforts based on the employee, and chances for meaningful work (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, n.d.).

There are different methods that may be considered for the development of employees. Each of the methods are useful under certain circumstances for certain employees. Mentoring is where a new employee is partnered with a more experienced employee. Individual development plans are used to quicken the employee's development by listing goals and associated strategies.

The 9-box grid can be used as a visual tool to help managers assess an employee's potential future contribution. Cross training is where employees are trained in skills required in other positions than their own. Stretch assignments are actual work projects that will push the employee to learn new competencies to complete. Succession planning is a more in depth and complex process which involves preparing employees for future roles in the organization (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015).

Job enlargement is when an employee's current job is simply expanded to include more of the same tasks. Job enrichment is when an employee's role is expanded in responsibility level. Job enlargement and enrichment can be part of job redesign and conversations with employees about the changes is critical to manage possible misperceptions (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015).

Job shadowing allows employees to view the duties of other positions in the organization. Job rotation is a more formal and systematic approach where employees move from one job to another job over time. This allows employees to have more in depth experiences and see more aspects of the entire business (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015).

Feedback needs to be given over time and not just at an annual performance review. Managers need to be able to adapt their feedback delivery to each employee that they support, some employees will prefer more feedback and other will prefer less. There is a need for balance, there must be enough feedback for employees to be able to improve performance as needed and for employees to feel appreciated while not overwhelming the employees with constant feedback (Ashdown, 2014).

Feedback presented should be in a constructive manner. To be constructive, feedback should provide objective and factual information, specific examples and be focused on "two or

three things individuals could do differently at work that will make a considerable difference to their performance” (Ashdown, 2014, p.136). Traditionally feedback for employees comes from the direct manager, in recent years there has been a movement to the use of 360-degree feedback. This type of feedback is where information is collected from a variety of stakeholders who all interact with the employee in a different way and therefore will have a different perspective on the employee’s performance. All of this information that is collected is then presented to the employee as a different form of feedback aimed at employee development (Ashdown, 2014).

Praise is an influential form of feedback. Sometimes feedback is focused on performance deficits and there is a lack of focus on employees’ strengths and successes. Acknowledgement of good performance and achievements can have a positive impact on employee motivation and commitment (Ashdown, 2014).

Feedback is an essential role in the employee development process. If employees are going to succeed in a current role and then grow and develop in to new roles, they need to understand their performance in a real time and constructive manner. This feedback creates an environment where employees are motivated to develop and succeed (Ashdown, 2014).

One example is GE’s development approach. It is described as one that is forward thinking and ongoing; it is less focused on a once per year review of performance but a culture of coaching and feedback from anyone in the employee’s circle. The system in place is also fully supported by technology which allows for real time capturing of notes from supervisors and employees which helps track and facilitate conversations (Baldassarre & Finken, 2015).

Personal development plans are tailored plans that are developed and implemented by the employee with the support of managers. These plans use is intended to improve performance and encourage learning. The plans are tailored to the specific development goals of the

employee as well as the employee's learning style. The key to a successful performance development plans is the employee's involvement in the creation and execution of the plan and the encouragement of the manager and the organization (Ashdown, 2014).

Coaching and mentoring are employee development strategies where employees work with other more skilled employees. Coaching is a development tool often provided by an employee's direct manager throughout the completion of the employee's typical work. Coaching is mostly seen as an interim solution to performance development related to certain skills or competencies. Managers help employees develop and build skills by encouraging employees to problem solve and create solutions. Effective coaching requires managers who listen well to employees and provide quality feedback (Ashdown, 2014). Mentoring is an employee development strategy where a more experienced employee partners with a newer employee. The focus of a mentoring relationship is often on more holistic career development components versus job skills and competencies (Ashdown, 2014).

Implementing Performance Development Programs

Establishing a performance development program takes time, energy and support from both managers and employees. An implementation process with clearly defined steps and quality communication is critical to the implementation success.

Steps in the implementation process. There are three phases for the implementation of new performance development processes. The first phase of implementing a performance development program is a contextual analysis. It is critical to have a strong understanding of the organizational culture and core values to ensure that the performance development program aligns with those elements. Also, management style must be analyzed. For culture and management style, structured observation may be necessary to gain true insights. Organization

type and structure is also included in the analysis. Some considerations may include centralized versus decentralized structures, companies that operate internationally and how many direct reports one manager may have (Ashdown, 2014).

Also, during the phase one analysis, it will be critical to review and understand the organization's past use of performance development processes and employees' past experiences with the performance development processes. The next part of the analysis phase is to determine what the organization hope to achieve with the new performance development process. To ensure that the performance development process meets the expectations of the people of the organization, a corresponding evaluation tool needs to be developed during this phase (Ashdown, 2014).

The second phase of the implementation is design. In this design phase, the specific elements of the performance development process need to be defined. These elements include the roles and responsibilities of the different people involved in the process and the timeline and frequency of process activities (Ashdown, 2014). Documentation requirements for the process also needs to be identified and deigned. Some organizations may require a more formal documentation procedure than other organizations. Another important element to ensure is aligned during the design phase is technology. The technology infrastructure must support the users in the processes as well as be integrated with other department systems to enable workflow (Ashdown, 2014).

The last phase is the actual implementation of the process. This phase requires successful project management, this includes delivering the project deliverables on time and making sure resources were used appropriately. One important step during implementation is conducting a pilot of the performance development process. This pilot can help identify areas of the actual

project that need more work; this is beneficial to identify early in the implementation. The pilot may also help identify employees in the organization who may need more support throughout the implementation. On the other hand, the pilot may also identify employees who can help support and drive the implementation. These employees could be potential trainers or coaches and could help promote the new process (Ashdown, 2014).

Communication throughout the implementation of the new performance development process is crucial. Communication should be constant, consistent and two-way (Ashdown, 2014). There should be updates shared with those who are leading the project. There should be question and answer opportunities with managers and employees where feedback is collected. Also, there should be updates if there are changes from the original plan. There can be different modes of communication utilized including electronic email, intranet, and face to face (Ashdown, 2014)

Training managers and non-manager employees about the new performance development process is critical to the success of the new process. Special considerations should be given to the actual training experience for all learners to ensure that they have the information, skills, abilities and confidence to participate in the new performance development process (Ashdown, 2014). Quality adult learning theory techniques should be utilized in the training to give learners the opportunity to practice what they learn in the training sessions. Also, the trainers of the sessions should not only be subject matter experts, but they should be specifically aware of what the employees are experiencing in their day to day work and be able to relate to the learners during the training. This will ensure that learners see the trainers as credible. There should continue to be additional support offered after the initial training and implementation of the new process. Organizations need to have special awareness to offer training to employees that are

brought into management positions after the implementation is complete to prevent a skills gap from occurring (Ashdown, 2014).

Ways to increase implementation success. There are many best practices to incorporate into the implementation process to increase the success of the implementation. There needs to be support from executive leadership and involvement from management (Society for Human Resource Management, 2015). Not only should there be support and involvement from leaders, the leaders should be role models of the new process (Ashdown, 2014). Other people in the organization should be identified as change agents to help drive the new process change for the organization. These identified change agents do not need to be in leadership roles, they need to be believers of the process who are willing to share their opinions and influence others (Ashdown, 2014).

The performance development process should apply to all employees regardless of level in the organizational hierarchy. The performance development process should have a clear purpose that is linked to organizational success; employees need to be able to relate their performance to the success of the organization. The greater goals of the organization should translate into goals for employees. Managers and the employees that they support should have agreement about required performance and understanding of the performance development process. Managers need to be given the resources and time to effectively support employees through the new performance development process (Ashdown, 2014).

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to gain an understanding of Company XYZ's colleague experiences relating to performance management and employee development practices.

Methodology

This study was designed as a descriptive, observational, qualitative study using small group responses to a standardized set of questions to identify common experiences of Company XYZ colleagues regarding performance management and employee development practices.

Subject Selection and Description

Subjects for this research were colleagues of Company XYZ. There were a total 1,050 colleagues employed at Company XYZ at the time of the study. At the time of merge, approximately 35% of colleagues came from Company X, 35% came from Company Y, and 30% came from Company Z. Colleagues at Company XYZ have the option to work remotely or work from office locations depending on type of work and personal preference. Approximately 80% of colleagues work remotely at some time during the week. Each of the three companies had different performance management systems and employee development practices and procedures. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the differences and to identify common positive characteristics of Company XYZ's colleague experiences relating to performance management and employee development practices.

Colleagues that participated in the study were invited to attend a data collection forum and shared their experiences with, and perspectives on, performances management systems and employee development practices. Participation in the study forums was voluntarily. All 1,050 Company XYZ colleagues were invited to participate in the research sessions. Convenience

sampling was used by allowing colleagues to sign up on a first come, first serve basis. There was a total of nine sessions with 35 open seats in each session, which means there was opportunity for a possible 315 colleagues to participate in the forums. A total of 125 colleagues actually participated in the sessions out of a possible 315 spots, for a 39.7% participation rate. The 125 subjects self-selected by voluntarily choosing to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

An instrument consisting of 16 questions was developed by the researcher. It was identified as Your Voice Forum Research Instrument (see Appendix B) and was created specifically for this study. Five of the questions were specifically designed to have participants describe their experiences with employee development practices. Eleven questions were developed to gather participant's opinions about, and their personal experiences with, performance management systems. The instrument included introductory remarks that were used to inform participants of the safeguards in place to ensure participant confidentiality and set the stage for participant engagement. The instrument was developed initially by the researcher and then reviewed and edited by the Chief TLC Officer and other members of the TLC Division. This review and edit process was completed to ensure that the instrument would collect the data needed for the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected by using group interviews. Company XYZ hosted nine data collection sessions called Your Voice Forums in six locations. There were nine three-hour sessions offered over a span of two weeks. Each session had a maximum number of 35 participants, for a total of 315 possible participants.

Before the session. Sessions were advertised via company email and an intranet news article. Appendix A: Your Voice Forum Invitation outlines the specific information sent to colleagues regarding the sessions. Information for each session was posted on the Company XYZ intranet and the colleagues were able to sign up on a first come first serve basis. Reminder emails were sent to those participants who had signed up prior to each session which included session location logistics information.

During the session. At each session, participants were greeted by a member of the Talent, Learning and Culture Division. Participants were assigned seats based on office location so each group had a mixture of participants from different office locations. The sessions were facilitated by two members of the Talent, Learning and Culture Division. Facilitators used the Your Voice Forum Research Instrument for facilitating the sessions to ensure the consistency of each session. Participants were assured that no names or identifying information was collected during the session. The facilitators proceeded through the agenda by asking participants the sixteen survey questions. Participants worked in groups to record their answers on easel paper provided at each table. After participants had the opportunity to work together to record their answers in small groups, a representative from each group shared the answers with the large group. After each group shared the response, a facilitator collected the easel papers from every group. Each easel paper was marked with a notation of session number/group number/question number. This process continued until all sixteen questions had been asked by the facilitator, answered by all groups, and easel papers collected. Participants were thanked for their participation and dismissed from the forum.

After the session. All data recorded at each session was transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet for sorting, organizing, review, and analysis. The paper copies of the data were

disposed of in secure paper shred bins at the Company XYZ office and the digital data was stored on secure Company XYZ drives.

Data Analysis

Participant responses collected at the forums were listed in Excel and reviewed and analyzed by the Learning and Organization Development team of the Talent, Learning and Culture Division. Responses were reviewed and sorted into themes. Data summaries were created based on the themes.

Chapter IV: Results

Company XYZ did not have a performance management and employee development system which resulted in in confusion, frustration, and inconsistency for both leaders and colleagues. The purpose of this research was to answer the question:

Regarding performance management systems and employee development practices,, what are the experiences and opinions of the colleagues of Company XYZ?

A total of 125 colleagues participated in one of nine forum sessions held between May 22, 2018 and May 31, 2018 in Company XYZ office locations. The 125 colleagues represent 11.9% of the total colleagues employed by Company XYZ. At each focus group session, the participants worked in small groups to answer sixteen questions about their experiences with performance management systems and employee development practices. There was a total of 31 small groups which provided feedback. Responses from the 31 small groups was sorted into themes and that data was analyzed.

Item Analysis

The question set was separated into two sections, performance management and professional development. The first set consisted of eleven questions and the second set consisted of five questions. The first three questions asked the focus group to describe past experiences with performance management systems and performance reviews. The system itself was described as one that included goals and expectation, an evaluation completed by a leader and an evaluation completed by the colleague being evaluated. The system included annual meetings to discuss feedback. Other common elements identified were rating systems and a link to pay increases. When asked who was involved in performance management systems, the most common responses were leader, colleague being evaluated, peer of the person being evaluated

and the human resources department. Participants were asked to describe what they would change about their experiences with performance management systems and performance reviews. The most common themes identified from the combined group notes were the addition of expectations and guidelines, more feedback, the addition of 360-degree feedback, focused on colleague strengths and to have performance reviews more often than annually.

The fourth question asked focus group participants to describe their experiences with performance rating scales as part of the performance management system. The main themes identified from the combined group notes were that performance rating scales help define expectations and show colleagues where their performance ranks.

The fifth question asked the focus groups to describe what success would look like regarding rating scales as part of a performance management system. The main theme identified was participants did not want a rating scale used. If there was a rating scale, participants identified the needs for clear performance expectations, examples for each rating on the scale, and consistent use of the scale.

The sixth question asked the focus groups to describe what success would look like regarding setting goals as part of a performance management system. Three distinct themes were identified from the combined group notes. They were desire for professional and personal goals, plan on how to achieve goals, and support from leaders.

The seventh question asked the focus group participants to recommend how people should be trained about a new performance management system. The main recommendations from the combined focus group notes were in-person classroom training, in-person training with work teams, and webinar training. Other recommendations included question and answer session and training not being conducted by leaders.

Questions eight, nine and ten asked the focus groups to describe the roles of various people involved in a performance management process. There were four main themes identified related to the role of the colleague being evaluated. The themes were that person being evaluated needs to be open and willing to listen to feedback, be active in the performance management process, complete a self-evaluation and create goals as part of the process. There were five main themes identified related to the role of the leader of the person being evaluated. The themes were that the leader is supposed to provide feedback, gather data about colleague performance, be open and willing to listen, focus on colleague strengths, and be consistent and fair.

The top five stakeholders identified as needing to be part of the performance management system were the colleague being evaluated, peers of the person being evaluated, the leader of the person being evaluated, members (customers), and the Talent, Learning, and Culture Division. The role of the person being evaluated was identified as taking a lead in the performance management process. The role of the peer of the person being evaluated was identified as providing feedback to create a culture of accountability. The role of the leader of the person being evaluated was identified as reviewing performance, being honest and consistent, and being knowledgeable about the colleagues being evaluated. The role of the Talent, Learning, and Culture Division was identified as providing training and acting as an objective party if there are issues.

The eleventh and final question in the performance management section asked the focus groups to describe what success would look like regarding the overall performance management system. Based on the combined group notes, the participants described an individualized system

that provides feedback and support to colleagues, includes ongoing meetings with leaders, that includes goals and incentives, and is focused on colleague strengths.

The twelfth question was the first question in the professional development question set. This question asked the focus groups to list the different methods they used to learn new skills throughout their careers. Three distinct themes were identified from the combined group notes. They were educational opportunities like workshop and conferences, learning directly from co-workers and leaders, and mentoring.

Questions thirteen and fourteen asked the focus group participants to describe ways in which organizations have helped them develop from one role to the next and develop in their current role. Three themes were identified from the combined group notes. The first theme was that organizations encouraged and/or provided educational opportunities for all levels of colleague. The second theme was mentoring programs and the third theme was organizations offered opportunities for advancement and promoted from within.

The fifteenth and sixteenth questions asked the focus groups to describe how leaders have helped them develop from one role to the next and/or in their current role. When participants were asked what well with the experiences, three distinct themes were identified. Those themes were leaders empowering colleagues, making time from colleagues, and providing a positive environment. When participants were asked to describe what they would change about their experiences, there were four clear themes. The themes were leaders empowering colleagues, knowing colleagues, offering feedback and coaching, and being a resource to colleagues.

Chapter V: Conclusion and Recommendation

Company XYZ did not have a performance management and employee development system which resulted in in confusion, frustration, and inconsistency for both leaders and colleagues. The purpose of this research was to answer the question:

Regarding performance management systems and employee development practices, what are the experiences and opinions of the colleagues of Company XYZ?

Conclusions

The focus groups were asked a series of sixteen questions, within the question set, there were questions that asked participants to give examples of their past experiences and there were questions that either asked participants to explain what they would change about their past experiences or give opinions about what they believed the future of Company XYZ's performance development system and employee development programs. The question set included questions about performance management systems as a whole and participants' experiences with individual elements such as goal setting and performance rating scales. Participants were also asked multiple questions about their experiences with organizations and leaders and professional development. The summary question in the performance management section asked the focus group participants to describe what success would look like regarding the overall performance management system. Based on the combined group notes, the participants described an individualized system that provides feedback and support to colleagues, includes ongoing meetings with leaders, that includes goals and incentives, and is focused on colleague strengths. This feedback aligns with the message, "gone are the days when performance management meant using a somewhat static annual process, focusing solely on supervisor-

subordinate pairs with little input from others, and relying on complex and likely invalid rating processes in an often feedback-poor environment (Dorsey & Mueller-Hanson, 2017, p. 37)

Limitations

The main limitation of the study was the small sample size. At the time this study was being conducted with the focus groups the organization was preparing for the unification of a business system. The timing of this organizational initiative is believed to be the biggest factor in the lower than expected participation in the focus groups.

The second limitation of the study was the use of convenience sampling. The type of sampling means that there is no way to verify that the participants of the study are a true representative sample of the entire organization.

Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that the following recommendations should be made to Company XYZ regarding the performance development system creation and for enhancements to the study.

1. It is recommended that Company XYZ use the results of this study during the design and implementation of a new performance development system.
2. It is recommended that a follow up study be conducted.
3. It is recommended that a survey instrument supplement the focus group research instrument.

References

- Ashdown, L. (2014). *Performance Management*. (1st ed.). London: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Baldassarre, L., & Finken, B. (2015, August 12). GE's real-time performance development. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2015/08/ges-real-time-performance-development>
- Dorsey, D., & Mueller-Hanson, R. (2017). Performance management that makes a difference: An evidence based approach. *SHRM Science to Practice Series*. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/special-reports-and-expert-views/documents/performance-management.pdf>.
- HR Council. (n.d.). *Keeping the Right People*. Retrieved from <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/keeping-people-performance-management.cfm>
- Indiana University Southeast. (n.d.). Performance development. Retrieved from <https://www.ius.edu/human-resources/training/performance-development.php>
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (n.d.). *Performance Development*. Retrieved from <http://hrweb.mit.edu/performance>
- Murrin, P., D.B.A. (2014, September 19). Engaging the organization: The people side of change. *National Graduate School of Quality Management*. Retrieved from <http://ngs.edu/engaging-organization-people-side-change/>
- Rick, T. (2017, February 08). Successful change management involves the employees. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.torbenrick.eu/blog/change-management/successful-change-management-involve-the-people/>
- Sensenig, K. J. (2009). *Engaging employees during times of uncertainty*. Retrieved from <http://docplayer.net/31853697-Engaging-employees-during-times-of-uncertainty.html>

Society for Human Resource Management. (2015, July 23). *Developing employees*. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/developingemployees.aspx>

The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center. (2015, November 03). *Seven ways to engage employees in change management*. Retrieved from <http://ritzcarltonleadershipcenter.com/2015/08/change-management/>

UC Berkeley. (n.d.). *Concepts & definitions*. Retrieved from <https://hr.berkeley.edu/hr-network/central-guide-managing-hr/managing-hr/managing-successfully/performance-management/concepts>

UC Berkeley. (n.d.). *Introduction*. Retrieved from <https://hr.berkeley.edu/hr-network/central-guide-managing-hr/managing-hr/managing-successfully/performance-management/introduction>

Williams College. (n.d.). *Performance development*. Retrieved from <https://hr.williams.edu/learning-and-development/perf-dev/>

Appendix A: Your Voice Forum Invitation

Invitation Email

You're invited to the 2018 *Your Voice* Forums!

The purpose of the *Your Voice* Forums is to provide an opportunity for you to engage with other colleagues around targeted topics. During the TLC facilitated event, colleagues will have the opportunity to share their unique perspectives and be heard. The feedback received is used to build or enhance initiatives focused on improving the colleague experience.

Below is a chart indicating the dates, locations, times, and topics of the forums along with a link for information and registration. Specific information about *Your Voice* Forum participation can be located by clicking the "link to register" in the chart below.

Important points:

- Participation at each forum will be capped at 35 participants.
- Your Voice participants are asked to attend only one forum session to allow the maximum participation from the organization.
- Participation in forums is 100 % voluntary.

Appendix B: Your Voice Forum Research Instrument

Introductory Remarks

Company XYZ values the experiences and feedback from colleagues and this forum gives colleagues an opportunity to contribute their voice to the future of Company XYZ. Company XYZ is about to explore new programs and solutions related to performance management and employee development.

Participation in the forums is completely voluntary and the organization supports participation. This forum is a safe place for colleagues to share experiences and make recommendations, the facilitators take confidentiality very seriously and want to ensure participants that multiple measures are taken to ensure that confidentiality. Participant comments and feedback will be collected, analyzed and summarized. There will be no identifiable information collected during the session and the data will be presented in aggregate form, which means that no one will be able to identify which participant contributed which comments. Information collected from the session will be stored securely on internal drives.

Questions

Topic 1: Performance Management and Performance Reviews

1. Describe your experiences with performance management systems. Performance management systems include determining performance expectations, evaluating performance and providing and receiving feedback about performance.
 - a. What elements were present in the systems you experienced?
 - b. Who was involved?
 - i. What were their roles?
 - c. What went well?
 - d. What would you change?
2. Describe your experiences with performance reviews. Performance reviews are formal or informal discussions about your performance and development.
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you change?
3. What would success look like for Company XYZ's use of performance reviews as part of the performance management system?
4. Describe your experience with performance rating scales as a form of performance measurement. For example, performance being rated on a scale of 1 to 5 during an annual performance evaluation.
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you change?

5. What would success look like for performance rating scales as part of the performance management system?
6. What would success look like for setting goals as part of the performance management system? Goals may include performance goals related to the specific role, career goals related to advancement, and/or development goals related to personal growth.
7. How would you recommend colleagues be trained about a new performance management system?
8. What do you see as the role of the colleague (person being evaluated) in the performance management system?
9. What do you see as the role of the leader of the person being evaluated in the performance management system?
10. Who should be involved in the performance management system?
 - a. What should their role be in the process?
11. What would success look like for Company XYZs overall performance management system?

Topic 2: Employee Development

1. What methods have you used to learn new skills throughout your career?
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you change?
2. In what ways have the organizations you have worked for helped you develop from one role to the next?
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you change?
3. In what ways has Company XYZ helped you develop in your current role?
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you change?
4. In what ways have the leaders who have supported you helped you develop from one role to the next?
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What would you change?

5. In what ways has your current leader helped you develop in your role?
 - a. What went well?
 - a. What would you change?

Copyright © Jennifer Utecht 2018

For requests to use this copyright-protected work in any manner, utechtj0252@my.uwstout.edu
or call [REDACTED]