Exercises for Ranking Performance

Ice-Breaker Exercise – Get in Line

Here's a great exercise to use as an ice-breaker for any workshop that focuses on assessing performance.

Ask delegates to stand up, and then order themselves (in turn) according to the following criteria:

• Height

• Length of service with the organisation

• Date of birth (not age)

• Distance they live from their workplace

The purpose of this is to get people talking, moving and (subtly) introduce the theme of ranking and measurement, and the fact that we can all be measured in so many ways!

**Virtual Option**: _Set up a Jamboard and ask each person to make a post-it note with their name on, and then move the post-it's around as appropriate._

Top Trumps

Split delegates into groups of 3-5. Give each group a pack of Top Trumps cards. Ask each group to select from the pack what they believe to be the best 5 and the worst 5 cars (animals, planes, Harry Potter characters etc) in the pack. **Each group should have the same pack**.

Allow 15-20 minutes for discussion and selection within the group.

Then, ask each group to share their decisions.

Highlight any differences between the groups' choices, and then lead a discussion to establish why there are differences when everyone had the same 'hard' facts.

- What criteria did people have when defining what 'best' and worst' was?
- Did people base decisions solely on the facts provided or did they use other knowledge that they had?
- Did they consider 'expert' opinions? (e.g. My mate is a car enthusiast, and he says… Top Gear rated…)
- Were they willing to disregard some of the information in line with opinions they had heard?
- Did the 'heart' rather than the head make some decisions?

Stress that ranking performance of individuals is not a hard science – we cannot put set criteria into a spreadsheet and get the right answers. Hard facts are useful, and they tell us a large part of the story.

However, this has to be supplemented by feelings, and 'intangible' aspects of someone's performance. In short, managers have to make a judgement themselves.

This judgement should be made based on as much information as possible, which means gathering hard data, speaking to other managers/colleagues, talking with the individual, checking out that feedback, and being absolutely sure that they have explored every aspects of the individual's performance.

Explain that ranking performance of team members is important to help managers to understand how well people are performing, and decide what actions they need to take to support each team member and allow them to improve performance.

Follow-on Discussion…

Potential Pitfalls

Discuss the lessons that have been learned from this such as the need to gather different viewpoints, the need to based judgements on facts, and the different pitfalls that managers can fall into when ranking their staff e.g:

- Central tendency

- Recency effect

- Halo/horns

- First impressions

- Harshness

- Similarity/difference

- Leniency

- Attribution