

## Managing Performance Collectively

All too often, Performance Management (PM), or whatever name you give it, is seen as a “must-do” rather than a want-to-do process. In our opinion, this comes from years of poorly managed PM processes due to little or no training to **facilitate** PM discussions effectively.

Another recurring issue is differing processes within the same organisation and a poor understanding of how vital PM is to an organisation’s culture, motivation, and productivity.



LaPD Solutions believe that the PM process impacts on many ingredients of organisational success by:

- assisting managers in identifying and addressing performance issues as they arise (*these may not be in the control of the reviewer*).
- providing Human Resources (HR) with valuable insights for training needs, succession management, retention and recruiting.
- providing the opportunity to give rewards, coaching needs to be filled, and consequences to be implemented as necessary. (*The latter many people fail to do*).
- offering the opportunity for employees to voice their opinions and feel listened to, valued and respected.
- gathering “clean” information to make informed decisions on individual and team performance. Roundup-style whole-team PM sessions are worth every minute.
- the alignment of individual, team, and organisational goals. Helping everyone feel a part of the wider organisation.
- allowing team members to have some input into the performance evaluations of their peers (but be aware of personality clash misuse).
- taking **immediate** action on those not pulling their weight. (*Research shows that people work together most cooperatively when slackers are forced to be accountable*).
- helping people feel they are being treated fairly and that they have a say in how they are evaluated. (*Consider an informal discussion about this with each person and then the group/team as a whole*).
- allowing team members to agree on how all their team members would be held accountable and what the consequences of failing to meet expectations would be. (*If the team agree on the rules collectively, they will be far more likely to adhere to them, police them and accept the consequences if they break them*).



We often assume that only our knowledge of others is sufficient to give feedback, but is it enough? We must consider how that person impacts our wider team and ask ourselves, what do others know that we don’t know? (Johari Window thinking can assist here).

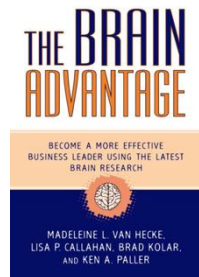


## The brain and PM:

The evidence shows that while *all emotions can be contagious*, “negative” emotions have greater power to influence. That makes sense because when we are negatively “triggered” emotionally, the amygdala in the brain’s limbic system is activated, and the “fight or flight” system kicks in, draining energy from the pre-frontal cortex (the “reasoning” logical part of the brain). This can happen unconsciously unless we develop the tools to bring it into awareness and mitigate the responses. ([From this website](#)).

*The following is taken from the book “The Brain Advantage”: Become a More Effective Business Leader Using the Latest Brain Research. Authors include Madeleine L. Van Hecke; Lisa P. Callahan; Brad Kolar; Ken A. Paller.*

It is not enough, just to be fair. Leaders/Managers must also ensure that employees perceive their decisions and actions as fair. This perception is not based solely on the actual fairness of the leaders' decisions. It is also influenced by two other factors—transparency and empathy.



When leaders are genuinely willing to listen to and treat employees' concerns with respect and empathy, those employees are far more likely to feel that they have been treated fairly. For example, employees passed over for a promotion are more apt to see the judgment as fair when they understand the basis for the decision. This may include explaining how the selected candidate was more qualified (transparency). However, the employee who was not promoted will be even more likely to feel fairly treated if the leader helps them become a more viable candidate for the next promotion. This could include assisting that person in gaining expertise and perhaps giving the employee a stretch assignment.

Leaders who listen carefully to the perspective of their employees, remain open to their ideas, and genuinely empathise with their concerns are more likely to be perceived as fair. Unfortunately, leaders do not always recognise how they come across to others.

## Genuine empathy creates trust and belief.

Joel Brockner, author of "Why It's So Hard to Be Fair," Harvard Business Review (March 2006), describes a well-respected electrical engineering firm with teams brainstorming ideas to improve the company. After the brainstorming session, the leaders of these teams streamed into a room filled with the company's executives.

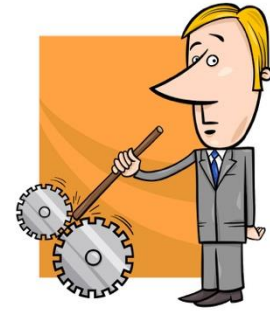


These team leaders were told to approach whichever executives they preferred and sell their ideas to those individuals. As Brockner puts it, the team leaders "swarmed like bees to honey" to the executives who had a reputation for being good listeners and being open to ideas, while other leaders stood around with nothing to do.

Another way to identify which leaders are perceived as approachable is to survey employees about whom they would go to, given the opportunity to talk with upper-level leaders. Provide employees with a list of people at similar levels of authority and see if a handful of people are consistently selected while their counterparts are rarely chosen. If that exercise shows a higher preference to some, then determine why and share the reasons so others can understand, learn, and develop.

### Saboteurs:

People retaliate against **perceived** unfairness by sabotaging others. Team members seek vengeance on slackers. How should leaders deal with the need for fairness? Hard-nosed leaders who go by the numbers might be tempted to use money as the basis of fairness. For example, they might assume they can establish fairness through equitable raises or severance packages. But both research and personal experience indicate otherwise. Fairness calculations also involve the less tangible factors of transparency and empathy.



### The brain scans of high IQ people: ([From this website](#))

“What would we expect to find if we examined the brain scans of people with high versus average IQ scores? We might picture the active brain of an Einstein as a hotbed of smouldering colours, but we’d be wrong. Neurologist Richard Restak summarised a UCLA study that compared individuals with high IQs to those with average IQs.” Restak wrote, “The researchers started off with the seemingly reasonable idea that smarter brains work harder, generate more energy, and consume more glucose. Like light bulbs, the brains of bright people were expected to illuminate more intensely than those less bright with a reduced wattage.



What they discovered instead was exactly the opposite. Higher IQ people had cooler, more subdued brain scans “while their less intellectually gifted counterparts lit up like miniature Christmas trees.”

“Why would smarter brains work less hard? One strong bet is that when we are inexperienced and we still have a lot to learn, we have to make a conscious effort to think about what we’re doing. But later, after we’ve become more adept, much of what initially took effort becomes automatic.”

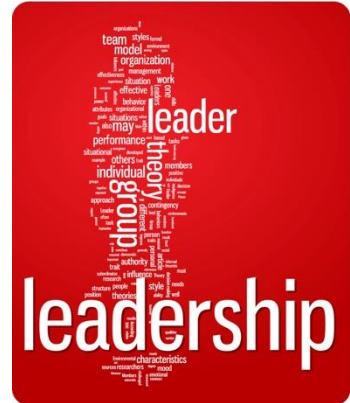
“In effect, it seems that high IQ people can more easily filter the signal from the noise, knowing what information to process to derive an outcome without the need to process all the other spurious thoughts.”

One of a leader's most important responsibilities is to help create a safe workplace culture within which personal growth and professional development are most likely to thrive. If a workplace was viewed as a garden, then leaders must function as attentive and caring people who have been given arguably the highest responsibility. A responsibility that includes nurturing, encouraging, supporting, managing, guiding, and developing the organisation's most important asset, its people who, if the culture fosters engagement and retention, are, in fact, the organisation's future leaders.



### Some food for thought:

- There must be enduring trust between and among all our people.
- We cannot control most of what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to it using EI.
- It is imperative to encourage and appreciate, indeed passionately invite disagreement and challenge.
- We must continually stress the freedom to say what we want or need to say (psychological safety), as this is the very foundation of innovation (Our own [ES<sup>2</sup>](#) thinking).
- Being right and thinking we are right feel the same from our perspective, so be careful of that, as belief creates reality ([Handout](#) on Belief Creates Reality).
- What we see and believe is often what we **expect** to see and **prefer** to believe.



In the afterword of the book, Ken Paller says:

“As a final thought about the relevance of neuroscience for leadership, I'd like to stress integrity. This book is full of useful ideas that emerge from neuroscientific considerations. However, ethics may not always come along for the ride when we learn about how we might use our brains better and improve our talents.

In the workplace, as anywhere, allowing our actions to be guided by ethical principles is of primary importance. Integrity and compassion for others should be job Number One. Hopefully, a neuroscientific understanding of the human mind will further illuminate why these principles are so important”.

Performance Management, or as we often call it “Career Development”, should be a two-way conversation between two people which balances what the organisation is paying us to achieve and creating the right environment for ALL colleagues to work in a safe and supportive environment where they are not only permitted to say what they want but are (through the People Strategy) told they must do.

