



Tim Corcoran is Principal Consultant of Right Management. He is an organisational consultant, facilitator and psychologist with a particular focus on leadership development, building organisational alignment on strategy and employee engagement. Contact: tim.corcoran@right.com.au

high performing managers add organisational value

Most senior and middle managers tell me they receive mixed messages about what is expected of them.

Management texts, written by experts such as Jack Welch and Jim Collins, espouse the importance of leading and developing people as part of business success. However, busy line managers often describe how they struggle to find the time to successfully achieve targets, get their own work done, and find the time to manage and develop their people. Right Management research in Australia and New Zealand has found that high performing managers do find the time, and do so significantly more than the lower performing managers.

In a number of major client studies for well performing Australian and New Zealand businesses, Right Management was asked to assess the organisational enablers and barriers to high performance, in key areas such as

- Leadership and the role of managers across the organisation
- Structure and role clarity, concerning accountabilities and authorities
- Management processes and systems, and
- Engagement of employees, to create a productive work culture

One of the key objectives of these studies was to assess if people were doing the right work to apply their organisational business model; from strategy, through structure and roles, down to actual job performance. The results for individual roles were analysed and split into the high and lower performers, with companies using their most relevant performance measures, such as revenue generation, team outputs, customer satisfaction and other KPI's.



Some of the most important findings related to the role of Managers, specifically those in middle and senior roles.

What the research found about high performing managers

In the organisations studied in Australia and New Zealand, higher performing managers spent:

- 100 percent more time in 'management and supervision of direct reports', interacting with their teams and developing their people, than lower performing managers. Their 'people' work included coaching, recognising performance, developing their personal and team's skills. Lower performing managers spent more of their time on their own 'technical' work.
- 60 percent more time on 'relationship management', building relationships across the organisation, on sales and

business development and meeting with clients. Lower performers spent more time in internal meetings, on spreadsheet reporting and general administration.

- Significantly more time briefing their Direct Reports and reviewing their work than lower performers. In one organisation, high performers spent an average three plus hours a week doing this, medium performers spent just under two hours, and lower performers spent less than 10 minutes doing so. In percentage terms for this study, high performing managers spent 150 percent more time with their direct reports than medium performers who spend 100 percent more time than low performers.

Defining job performance for managers:

The basic way to identify the high performers was to identify the business

outputs, or measures that change as a result of their behaviours and actions. However with Managers who lead teams, high performance meant more than just their outputs and the outputs of their team. By managing and developing their people, the Managers created added value for the organisation. To use a description by Motowidlo in his 2003 'Job Performance' article, "Behaviours, performance and results are different. Behaviours are what people do. Job performance is the total expected value of what people do." This is especially true for Managers of people, where they create value through:

- **Results** that add measurable value such as higher sales, team outputs, increased customer satisfaction, cost reduction and other KPI's.
- **Behaviours** that add value by setting the direction for the team, coaching team members, managing performance and building a productive culture.

What helps create high performing managers?

In our studies, one of the obvious and critical factors was to clearly articulate, in specific terms, the role and accountabilities of all managers. In some of the well organised businesses we studied, people managers/

leaders have clear accountability for:

- their own individual outputs
- the outputs of their team
- building capability in their team and
- developing effective relationships across the business

The four accountabilities listed above are important to improve performance and create sustainable results, and should not be delegated away to the HR Group or others. The following diagram shows how effective line managers balanced their roles, and how organisations created a system of leadership at the same time. People managers/leaders developed balance relevant to their role, to ensure focus and time to coach, to develop team and individual capabilities, to manage performance and manage relationships across the business.

The role balance below, as defined and exercised by the high performers, built capability for the organisation, and developed a network of leadership. The additional skills, knowledge and capability allowed the excess 'technical' work to be delegated down the organisation, and ensured the leader/manager added greater value by doing the right work. At the same time, this balance helped address some of the talent shortage in their organisations,

What can be learned from the lower performing managers?

The value added by the focus and behaviours of the high performing managers was contrasted by the experience of the lower performing managers:

- Lower performing managers did not spend adequate time transferring skills and knowledge to their team and across the business
- The lack of skill and knowledge transfer at the next level made it more difficult to delegate work (lack of skill and confidence), and to schedule teams to efficiently do the right work.

- The above encouraged the lower performing managers to hold on to the technical work that they should delegate.
- The cycle became complete as the lower performing managers were too busy with their own 'technical' work and found too little time to build capability in their teams, their direct reports and even themselves.

At an individual level, the higher performing managers were recognised for their outputs, as well as the total value they add by doing the right work. In other words, they achieved greater respect and recognition for the organisational value they added, through both results and behaviours. For the lower performers, the reverse was true. They found that being an individual contributor, known for single handedly providing 'technical' solutions, did not help them get the respect or recognition they sought, nor the advancement they desired.

Conclusion

This Right Management research validates the principle that managing and developing people is good for business. The research also supports two other beliefs. One is that line managers play a critical role in establishing a direct relationship with the members of their team to create a productive, high trust culture, within their team and across the business. In addition, this approach to management balances the required tasks and outputs for the organisation to achieve its goals with the importance of helping individual employees to grow and achieve their potential. ■

Role Balance

Finding the right balance of work as a Manager

