



*White Paper*

# ***Lift Off***

## **5 Steps Toward Higher Employee Performance**

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## Introduction: Employee Performance Challenges in Business

As a manager, sometimes you feel like you've hit a wall. Your employees have gone through their initial training sessions, and the follow-up sessions after that. Performance is low, however, and you're trying to get them to be more productive, accurate, efficient and independent. If you ask managers what their biggest frustrations are, you'll very likely to hear that one is that, despite their best efforts to get the most out of their team, the fact is that many workers, even those with seemingly high potential, either periodically or consistently underperform.

A key challenge then is how to go about handling underperformance, long before the point of decision to reduce the employees' activities or even their termination from the company. Companies invest time and money into finding talented workers and then training them, and there is a clear value in team continuity and familiarity. Therefore, managers should be able to find ways to identify underperforming workers and find a way to impact positive change quickly and professionally.

***This white paper will present some 5 clear steps toward raising employee performance levels. I hope you find it valuable and that it will help bring your team toward new heights.***

Before we begin though, I'd like to quickly look at some of the central challenges facing managers today, particularly with regards to employee growth and development. This includes of course the initial training period, but also, more generally, employee growth and development after the final training sessions have ended.

The first challenge is of course limited budgets due to the global economic recession which began in 2007, and the slow recovery we've seen since. There have been several statistics which have documented the funding cuts toward employee training and

development in the last several years. According to Bersin & Associates, for example, U.S. corporate training markets shrank from USD 58.5 billion in 2007 to USD 56.2 billion in 2008, the greatest decline in the ten years previous to then. On a per employee level, U.S. companies spent USD 1,202 per employee in 2007, while in 2012, just 5 years later, they spent on average just USD 706 per employee. While there is room for optimism, as overall budgets increased in 2012 and employers said in surveys that they intended to continue to increase them in 2013, T&D budgets are still not at the levels they were in before the recession.

The second challenge is the challenge of relevance. With the skills required for common tasks frequently changing (and the tasks themselves of course are evolving all the time), often what is taught in training sessions and beyond is questionable in terms of its direct relevance and applicability to an employee's work. A common question a manager might hear from an employee, when it comes time for initial or supplemental training or skills enhancement is "what's in it for me?" as the employee is challenging the notion that this will bring practical value to him/her. So when you're trying to raise performance levels, just as in the training process, it's important that you can help to demonstrate the clear link between training and performance.

Next, there has been a shift in recent years away from the traditional outlook of employee training, from a "first-inning" event which is then followed by employees being able to perform their tasks and responsibilities at full proficiency levels, to a more long-term and continuous learning and development strategy. Part of this of course is due to technological advances online, such as the cloud and mobile devices making materials accessible from any location, on any device and at any time. Yet it also includes a more collaborative type of learning, utilizing online sources such as social media, webinars, YouTube instructional videos, technical forums, conferences, skills workshops, and more. Companies, while they have come a long way, are still adapting and shifting their T&D strategies toward the continuous and multidisciplinary plan.

Finally, all of these challenges, which combine to help create a new reality in the world of employee performance management, are met with the need to train and manage a younger and different generation of workers. This generation is defined as having grown up with access to a diverse range of technology, and the expectations that come with that. At the same time, the younger generation also comes with short attention spans on average, and a craving for a more personal and engaged form of management. Something that speaks to them as individuals, so that they can fully grow and succeed in their own unique way.

With all that said, I will now present a series of 5 steps toward higher employee performance. These steps will have in mind the challenges facing training and performance managers today, and I hope they will create a more engaged workforce, one that is motivated work hard, succeed and perform at a higher level.

## Step 1: Identify Performance Gaps

There is a strong chance that you are one of the thousands of team managers out there trying to get your team up to speed. If you are looking to increase the performance of your employees, there are several factors that you need to be aware of. The first, and perhaps most critical aspect, is determining if your employees or teams are underperforming. If they are, you need to identify the reasons as to why they are not meeting your expectations.

There are several reasons why a person or group may be struggling to meet expectations. One of the biggest is simply not having the required knowledge to perform his/her required tasks. Whether a person is new to the company or has been there for years, not knowing where to go or how to perform tasks can slow down productivity drastically. Also, the lack of communication between

people and teams can halt progress. People are afraid to ask each other questions because they feel embarrassed that they don't have the answer. When they put their pride before them, they aren't helping the your company's growth.

Another issue may be the lack of feedback to the employee. They might think that they are doing a great job because nobody has told them otherwise. When people don't receive feedback or criticism, they will keep doing what they have because there is no reason to do anything new or different. Lastly, you may simply be working your employees too hard. It's important to know that people need to have fun while they work, otherwise they will be too overwhelmed and may shut down. By making work both fun and productive, employees are able to apply themselves much easier. Be sure to acknowledge what they are doing and give them positive reinforcement when they do things the correct way. People like to feel appreciated, and a little praise can go a long way.

When you are in charge of a team, you have the advantage of seeing the potential that each individual does not notice. You can see where everyone is having trouble, and you can also identify what points are being underutilized. If you communicate with your team and see what their concerns are, you'll be able to pinpoint different aspects that need to be investigated further. Your team won't be able to grow if you don't identify the gaps, and recognizing the fact that your team isn't performing as well as it can is an important first step.

## Step 2: Develop a Performance Roadman

It is one thing to identify where your trouble spots are, but another to do something about it. Creating a positive impact in the workplace isn't easy, but by creating a roadmap and a set of goals

will set you on the track to success. There is no way for your company to grow if you don't have clear objectives, so it's important to take the areas that need improvement and do what is necessary to make them better.

One of the best ways to creating a roadmap is by setting smaller goals for your teams to meet and putting them on the right path. Don't make them feel like they have to change drastically at once, but grow naturally and become better workers in the process. Let them see why you want to change and how you are tracking that growth.

Tracking and communication are two of the most important aspects that contribute to growth. Don't just set goals for your employees and expect them to implement them perfectly. Take the necessary steps to track their growth and see if they are meeting your expectations. Then, use that data to sit down with them and communicate your concerns as well as signs of improvement that you see. Don't just focus on the negative, let them know when they are doing things well also.

It's also important to give your employees the option to retrain in areas that they don't feel comfortable in. Offer to provide them with the training they need to improve their performance and become better at their jobs. When a person is confident with the knowledge that they have, he'll be able to resolve issues much faster and guide clients in a much friendlier manner. Finding the right training tool for you is essential for the growth of your team as well as the company in general.

Finally, let the employees know that their growth is in their hands. If they don't get motivated and take action, change won't happen. You must let them know that they are capable of becoming efficient workers and that the tools they need to grow are there and very simple to use. Don't make them feel like they have no way out; give them access to what they need to become the employee that you know they can become.

Employee growth can be difficult, but having a roadmap and using the right tools can make a world of difference. Don't let your team slow down productivity any longer, create a roadmap and set your business on the path to success.

### **Step 3: Clear Communication, Expectations and Transparency**

People naturally want to grow and do something new and different, otherwise they become bored and lose interest. As a leader, it's up to you to help them find new ways to increase and refine the talents that they have so that they can move up in the company or provide customers with better service. However, it's very difficult for people to find their own flaws, let alone work on them to become more well-rounded individuals. This is where performance management comes into play.

As a performance manager, you are able to see what the weaknesses of your teams or individuals are, and give them proper feedback. Teams that have been effectively managed will be improve their own performance, increase revenue for the company, have more satisfied customers, have fewer people quit or leave their job, and have higher levels of job satisfaction. All of this sounds very appealing, but what do you need to do to make your own teams this effective?

First, you need check a few main factors to see where things fall. Your teams and employees need to know what is expected of them. If they don't, they won't be meeting your needs because they don't understand what they are to do. They also need to have roles that play to their strengths, and not something that is holding them back. Lastly, they need a manager who cares about them and praises them



when they do well while providing criticism for rooms of improvement. In other words, clear communication on top of set expectations and transparency are what makes an employee successful.

What you can take from this is that an employee's growth is just as much about them as it is about you. You can't just throw your expectations onto them and think that they will change on their own. Show them that you care and give them the right tools to expand their knowledge. Team members are much more responsive when they feel like they have a leader that personally cares about them.

If you want to see change in your employees, you need to be the motivating factor. Let them know that you have faith in them and that you want them to grow. By being transparent about what you want and communicating on a regular basis, you will be much more likely to create the workforce that you have always dreamed of with the people that you trust.

## **Step 4: Strengthen Employee Training and Performance Support**

One of the best ways to increase an employee's performance is to provide for them the appropriate access to supplemental training materials. Even the most experienced employees have trouble remembering tasks that they don't typically perform or learning about new methods that have been introduced. Retraining your workforce gives you the confidence that everyone is on the same page and that nobody is pulling more than their fair share. However, there are some key aspects that you need to be aware of when focusing on strengthening training so that you don't end up wasting time and pulling valuable employees from your workforce to train them.

Your team is only as strong as the weakest link. However, the weakest link may not actually be the newest member to the workforce. There are several instances where the veteran of the company is struggling because the industry changes so much and new systems are implemented. These people may not want to admit that they are struggling because it makes them feel like they are not doing their jobs effectively. This is why it is important to train everyone on your team, not just the people that you think need help. Retraining is a very important aspect when building your team and strengthening their abilities. Many worry about retraining because it can take time away from actual work, but there is a simple solution to both problems.

Training while working is a fantastic way for people to see how the things they are learning have a real impact. People are much more resistant to change when they don't see the benefits of it. This is why you may have veteran members who refuse to change old habits because they feel like they can do the same thing without changing anything. When you train everyone as a group, you will be able to educate everyone at the same time and give real-world examples of why things matter. There are several different tools out there that can be used to guide in training, so find the one that fits your needs and can help your team grow the most.

What role do post-training performance support tools play in performance proficiency and assisting fresh employees in getting up to speed quickly?

Such tools efficiently raise the bar when it comes to knowledge adoption and help employees find their way around the office more easily with no extra effort on your side.

Managers should note that these tools are extremely effective in post-course training, as they efficiently strengthen the bond between the knowledge gained during training and the way it can be implemented in the various office activities.

Much has been written about continuous learning – that is, looking at employee learning as a long-term process long beyond the initial training event - and its importance in strengthening employee performance.

[WalkMe](#), an interactive online guidance technology, is able to deliver learners a valuable performance aid, which gives them simple and easy to understand step-by-step instructions in the exact real-time moment they need to perform a particular task.

WalkMe empowers training managers to enable employees, as they work, to successfully complete even the most complex tasks. By using a series of interactive tip balloons overlaid on the software they are using, employee tasks are broken down into short, step-by-step guided instructions. As a result, both during the initial training process and beyond, trainers can empower their employees so that they no longer need to focus on the technical aspects of operating the software, freeing them to become more productive and avoid mistakes.

In the absence of such technology, learners often struggle to figure out how to manage and operate their newly familiar software, whereas technology of this kind can guide them easily and quickly toward their final objective in a much faster way.

You can take your workforce to the next level with little to no effort. By having the right tools in your corner, you can help your team grow and become more efficient without taking any more time away from their tasks. Do what it takes to get everyone on the same page and create a powerful team that will be unstoppable.

## **Step 5: Performance Management: Monitoring, Feedback and**

Having an effective team isn't just about the individuals that work on the team. It's about the person that manages them as well. Without a proper person to guide a team, there is no way to properly encourage growth and provide the necessary feedback to take things to the next level. If someone truly wants to have a powerful workforce, they need to have the right leader in place as well. If you are a team manager, you need to keep certain things in mind so that you are moving your team (and the company) in the right direction.

First, you need to monitor your team's progress and what they are doing on a daily basis. This doesn't have to be something invasive or demeaning, but careful examination of what people are doing may illuminate trouble areas that were hidden before. You may find out that several team members were struggling with something that you thought everyone else understood. By monitoring what is happening and where people are having issues, you are able to make everyone work together once again. There needs to be communication between both you and the team members so that you have a clear idea of what people want and how you will deliver on those promises.

You must provide your team with feedback if you want them to be better workers. This doesn't just mean you tell them what they are doing wrong; positive feedback is just as necessary. You want to highlight a person's strengths and let them know what they are doing right so that they have the motivation to move forward. Set up weekly meeting times where you sit down with your team and talk with them one-on-one. This will help you see the team's concerns and build a roadmap so that your team is more experienced and proficient with their duties.

Along with monitoring and feedback, you need to have a team that is adaptable and can learn new tasks very quickly. You need to let them adapt to changes so that they continue to perform at their current level without taking the time away from customers. The times are changing all the time, and it is crucial for a company to

remain relevant. Give them feedback that pushes them and shapes them into more productive individuals.

If you manage a team, be sure that you are following these steps to create the best team possible.

## About WalkMe

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*WalkMe Inc.*, provider of the world's first interactive online guidance solution, helps training managers and strategists to accelerate employee time to competence and improve training effectiveness, ensuring a lasting impact on employee productivity while reducing training costs. Think of it like '*training* your software to work with you employees.'

WalkMe provides training managers with *WalkMe™*, an indispensable tool to enable new and existing employees, as they work, to easily and successfully complete their desired tasks. By using a series of interactive tip balloons overlaid on the software they are using, employee tasks are broken down into short, step-by-step guided instructions. As a result, both during the initial training process and beyond, trainers can empower their employees so that they no longer need to focus on the technical aspects of operating the software, freeing them to become more productive and avoid mistakes.



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