

What really drives performance or what really drives us

by Dragan Milicevic on February 5, 2020

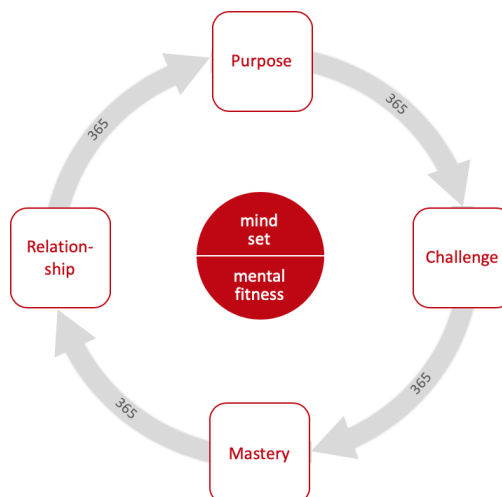
*"If we did the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves."
-Thomas Edison*

Let's get started: The next round of performance and development reviews is just around the corner. According to the current article in the Tagesspiegel newspaper, it is a 98% "horrible" experience for both sides. Why is that? We can show you how to make use of the latest brain research, not only to turn the performance review into the most crucial meeting of the year, but also to positively influence short, medium and long-term performance.



The latest brain research tells us that performance is affected by a hormone cocktail consisting of four ingredients: noradrenaline, oxytocin, dopamine, endorphin. Sounds like Greek to you? Well it's been scientifically proven. The question is: How do you as a manager ensure that the brain of your employees produces this hormone cocktail?

Years ago, to simplify matters, we developed a performance management model - "365 Performance Management Approach" - that makes it easy for you to positively influence performance. This has been proven effective in numerous of our management training courses on performance management, in DAX30 companies, among others.



Purpose

Without a sense of purpose, no one gets up from the couch (unless it's physically necessary). In order for us to master a task well, it has to be meaningful for us. Then endorphins are set free. Endorphins not only produce feelings of happiness, they also promote "liking" and thus the desire for a task.

Challenge

In order for us to perform, we need a challenge, otherwise we will become bored. When I go to my CrossFit workouts, I always look at the performance from my last workout. I automatically raise my goal for the day. The heart rate increases, releasing adrenaline/noradrenaline. Noradrenaline provides us with motor energy and helps us to focus our attention on what is important at the moment - the challenge. In other words, it shields us from unnecessary distractions.

Nevertheless, the task for your respective employees must be well chosen - not too big and not too small. Otherwise it can lead to them being over- or underchallenged.

Relationship

Supportive relationships with colleagues and superiors used to be dismissed as a hygiene factor - a nice-to-have. Today we know that oxytocin, among others, is distributed when we experience relationships positively. Your employee does not have to like you as a friend. What he needs is trust and the assurance that you stand behind him – an asset that is by no means a given in today's business world. The reason why performance appraisal interviews are 98% "gruesome," is largely because managers fail to establish a positive relationship in the interview.

Mastery

Willingness is one thing, ability is another. Having the necessary skills makes your employees productive. This means that you, as a manager, must recognise their strengths, know how to use them in a targeted manner and continuously develop them. This is the only way to ensure that challenges can be successfully mastered.

Moreover, when we experience success, our brain releases dopamine - the success hormone. Dopamine again ensures that we are motivated for the next task. In other words: success motivates. We also experience a rush of dopamine when we are having fun. So, make sure your employees have fun. Humour costs nothing and has never harmed anyone.

Mental Fitness

Mental performance is not just a matter of the mind. It is also – even if it's hard to believe – a physical issue. According to Matthew Walker, world-famous neuroscientist and professor at the University of California, Berkley, recurring, insufficient sleep of six hours and less reduces our own aspirations (we look for simple tasks), the ability to concentrate drops by 400% and the learning ability decreases significantly. The tenet "work a lot and you get a lot" begins to backfire.

Mindset

Your inner attitude towards your employees also influences success or failure. Studies prove this. If you don't believe in your employees, their performance will decrease. Sounds like superstition, but it's true. Therefore, examine your mindset, especially before the performance appraisal interview.

As you can see, to encourage top performance, managers must take different levels into consideration. If you want to inspire your employees and don't want to contribute to the 98% horrible experience, then take a look at our "Performance Management 4.0" training with these goals:

- Positively influence employee performance and motivation
- Conduct performance appraisal and development talks confidently and inspiringly
- Be effective in the role of the performance and development coach
- Formulate performance and development goals (OKRs)
- Know what state-of-the-art performance management is all about
- Give constructive and motivating feedback regularly
- Know and apply principles of high performing teams

Contact us if you would like to find out more. We wish you inspiring employee reviews.

Dragan Milicevic and Andreas Seitz are experts in the field of performance management. As internationally active coaches and trainers, they accompany board members, managing directors and teams on their way to higher performance. They work in German, English, French and Spanish.