
Kent County Council

Competency Model Building and a Total Reward Approach

Summary: In 2002 Kent County Council was aiming to strengthen the link between pay and performance to ensure that employees were being fairly rewarded. The existing reward structure wasn't flexible enough and it had become apparent that there wasn't a robust or consistent appraisal process to measure performance.

Background to project:

KCC have been working over the last five years to create a Total Reward programme across the organisation, encompassing: tangible benefits, flexible working practices, recognition tactics, pension & benefits, voluntary benefits and linking the programme accurately with performance. A key element of this package is the appraisal programme and within that, the "Ways to Success" project which identified key competencies and built a framework which would support the reward and recognition programmes.

Key aims:

To create a system whereby managers and employees would have effective and frequent dialogue around key objectives and better ways to deliver these.

To create a consistent and open appraisal process that would inform the tangible reward aspect of the Total Reward programme.

Actions:

Kent County Council asked HayGroup to help identify key behaviours and build a framework which would illustrate the ideal ways for employees to deliver their objectives. The behaviours had to be relevant to a broad range of people and roles and be implemented easily in a practical way.

Focus groups were conducted with employees from across the Council in order to gain input and ideas about behaviours that were already displayed within the organisation that contributed to success.

Several behaviours were identified and these were narrowed down to the final 13 that would be used to make up the framework. It was felt that numbering different levels of the behaviours would not create the desired level of clarity, so descriptive levels e.g "poor", "excellent" were used instead to make it simpler to understand and implement.

Once the framework had been created, it was important to ensure that the managers were able to understand and use it effectively in order to create the best climate possible for employees to flourish.

A user guide was devised, with accompanying training delivered to line managers so that they could see how the behaviours should be discussed in an appraisal context. This was critical to success as the judgement of line managers (and consistency of this judgement) was the key to the success of the appraisal process.

It was important that the framework was pragmatic and all levels of employees in the wide variety of roles within KCC would understand them and see how some, if not all, related to their personal role and were exactly what they claimed: a Way to Success. A series of road-shows were delivered across the organisation and gave employees the opportunity to ask questions and gain more information about the new appraisal system and the behaviours.

Outcomes

The Ways to Success were successfully implemented into the appraisal process and form one of the four components: Delivery of objectives

Ways to Success

Personal Development Plan

Wider job contribution.

The scores of these areas are measured by the line manager and the total will dictate how quickly the employee is able to progress within the organisation. Line managers also have the ability to make cash or non-cash awards for exceptional performance.

This process has been in place for four years now and seems to have been fully integrated into the organisation. Employees are familiar with the behaviours and aware of what they need to do to perform well in their role. The managers also feel fully involved in the development of their team and have seen an improvement in the overall performance of their staff.

Ultimately, KCC has created a flexible and consistent way of linking performance to pay and progression, whilst also imbedding a culture of continuous improvement.

Learning points

It is important to set up a project team and involve employees fully in the whole process so that they understand the objectives of the process.

Trade unions were also involved from the outset, which meant that challenges to the behaviours or overall total reward programme, once launched, were minimal.

The most important part of this project was to develop the perception of the appraisal process into one of a positive opportunity and the behaviours as practical ways in which staff felt they could do their job better: Making it make sense.