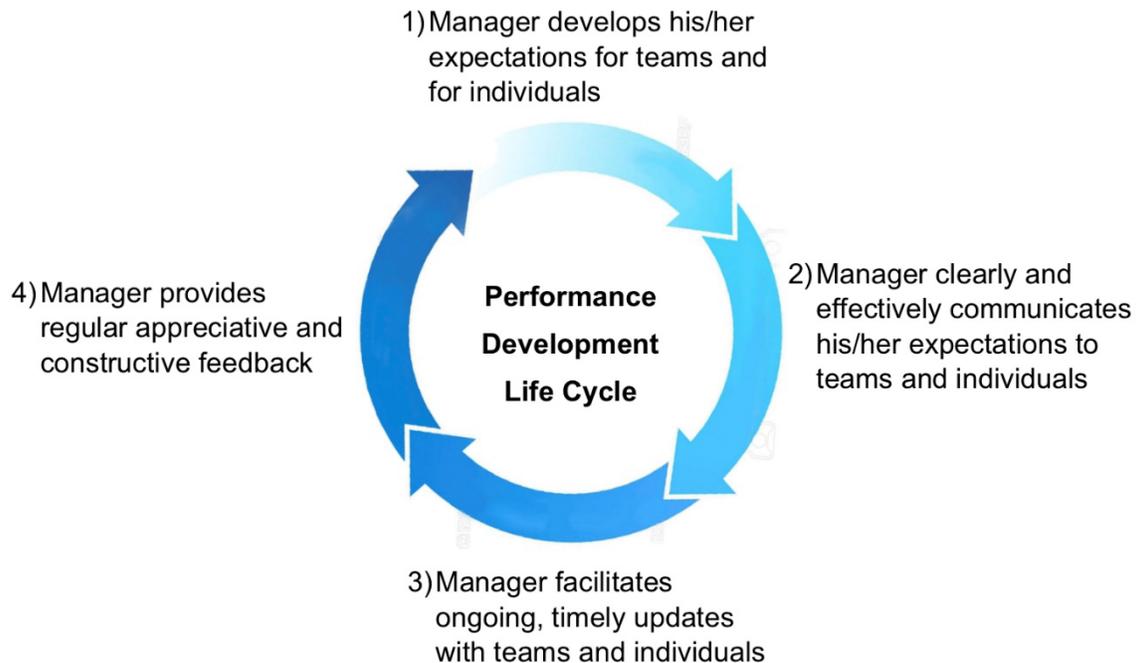


## FOUR STEPS TO MOTIVATING PERFORMANCE

This tool is aimed at helping managers learn how to motivate the performance of the people they supervise – both individuals and teams. It helps managers remember the key steps in the process – and how to foster accountability and follow through. Ultimately, it highlights for managers that the performance of other people ultimately depends on their own performance and accountability.

The four steps are shown below:



**Step 1:** The cycle begins with the manager developing and deciding on her/his expectations for both individuals and teams. Expectations come in two forms:

- What needs to get done i.e., the desired results and “deliverables”
- How it gets done i.e., the “rules” for team engagement and communication

In terms of “what” needs to get done, these expectations are typically anchored in the organization’s strategic plans and action plans – and other priorities. As you develop your expectations of other people, you should consult with those who’ll be impacted and try to make them as “S.M.A.R.T.” as possible, meaning:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Agreed-upon
- Relevant
- Timely

With regard to the desired behaviors and “rules of the road” for both individuals and team, typically these address topics like the following:

- Frequency of team meetings
- Attendance expectations at team meetings
- How to assure meetings are effective e.g., agenda preparation and follow through
- Frequency of written updates
- How to manage conflicts with other team members
- Timeliness of responding to emails and other communications

**Step 2:** In order to assure that expectations are clearly communicated, imagine yourself in the recipient’s shoes. It’s important to provide people ample opportunities to discuss and understand what’s expected. This applies whether it’s an individual employee or a team.

In the case of communicating expectations to people who work for you, you carry an implicit authority to tell people what to do. However, it’s never the best approach to impose your expectations. Instead, you should aim to foster a sense of ownership in the expectations. To make sure you’ve communicated clearly, acknowledge that your “transmitter” may not always work perfectly. So, check for understanding by asking:

- What questions do you have?
- How can I help clarify?
- What concerns do you have?
- What are the inter-dependencies; who is dependent on whom to get their work done?
- What are potentially conflicting priorities?
- What are ways to overcome those potential conflicts?

Motivating people depends on their feeling trust in you and your leadership. Managers can build trust by showing appreciation, communicating information broadly, showing vulnerability, and intentionally building relationships with people. Signs of a safe space include people asking questions, suggesting ideas, and admitting mistakes.

**Step 3:** Effective motivation and performance management hinges on regular, frequent, meetings to discuss how things are going. Use the agreed-upon expectations and actions steps as the basis for regular updates and check-ins – daily, weekly or monthly.

Your job at these meetings is to facilitate discussion i.e., to ask questions and listen: Where do people feel successful? Where are they stuck? What do they need to succeed? Help them identify things within their control to change.

Part of clarifying expectations is also being clear about what decision-making roles:

- What decisions are people expected to make?
- How are they supposed to make them? Consultatively? By consensus?
- What level of authority is delegated to them? (See related tools on the Three Levels of Delegated Decisions and 5 Types of Decisions.)

**Step 4:** The last step is to provide ongoing, timely communication and feedback about what the employee is doing well, and what areas need improvement and development. The manager should provide this feedback on an ongoing basis – and not wait for a formal appraisal.

Some guidelines to giving effective feedback:

- Provide appreciative feedback more often than constructive feedback. (The number one employee complaint is that they don't get recognized for a job well done.)
- Don't wait – "when you see it or think it, say it."
- All feedback should be specific. Use the "SBI" approach:
  - S: What was the specific situation?
  - B: What specific behaviors did I see the person demonstrate?
  - I: What was the specific impact?

When giving feedback, it's vitally important that the recipient trust that you are there to help them be successful, not to punish them. Check your emotional tone and guard against "emotional contagion."

- If you don't think people can get the job done, they will sense your lack of confidence in them.
- If you seem impatient, people won't believe you're trying to help them.

Before you hold others at fault for something they failed to do, remember to check your assumptions of your own competence. Ask yourself:

- Did I communicate the expectations clearly?
- Did I give people ample opportunity to share their concerns?
- What could I have done better?

Lastly, it's important that you also ask for feedback about how well you are doing. The more regularly you ask for feedback, the more readily employees will dispel their fears and view giving and receiving feedback as a positive part of the management process.