

How can you design your performance management and appraisals to best support employee language learning?

With seismic shifts happening in the way we work over recent years, the future of effective performance management is focused on a shift from accountability to learning and a focus on developing strengths as opposed to resolving weaknesses.

That means more emphasis on equipping employees to work towards future achievements based on existing strengths and less emphasis on what's previously been achieved (and sometimes what has not been achieved).

This shift is especially important to bear in mind when it comes to developing language and communication skills within your team, balancing the needs of your business with the learning and development needs of employees.

Since skills like English language proficiency are becoming increasingly valued in the workplace, and it's the foundation that all other business skills, hard and soft, are built on, making sure that your performance management system supports this is vital. Organizations that primarily use English can



harness the power of improved employee language proficiency to develop wider skills like communication (and there will be a knock-on effect on hard skills like following courses in English, too).

An effective performance management system underpins a healthy culture of language learning. Performance reviews and appraisals are the bedrock of effective employee development, and regular touchpoints offer a wealth of opportunities to identify and resolve issues such as barriers to learning and skills gaps.

So, you've identified an English language skills gap within your team.

You know that language learning is intrinsically linked to better all-round skills improvement, and you want your performance management system to support you in addressing this. How do you use performance reviews to raise overall language proficiency levels and help employees work towards future achievements?

We've got four great tips to get you started...

1 Map individual language learning goals to business needs

Before agreeing language learning goals with your employees, take a step back to understand what your business's language needs are. Perhaps you'd like to improve the standard of your team's spoken English in order to provide a more consistent standard of customer service? Or maybe you'd like your employees to develop their conversational skills to prepare them for working within an emerging market for your business?

By mapping individual language learning goals to business priorities, you can design a performance management plan that benefits both your employees and the business as a whole.

2 Understand your employees' language learning needs

It's important to have a good understanding of current language skill levels within your team, and also the personal preferences of your employees. Achieve this by surveying your team and asking about their current confidence levels, learning styles and personal goals when it comes to language learning.

You can also interview employees individually and ask them to reflect on their language learning progress to date, and ask them which strengths in particular they'd like to develop next. This information can serve as a powerful platform upon which to build a motivating set of language learning objectives that your employees have had an opportunity to have input in themselves.

Learn more about how to support effective language learning in your performance management system with [Versant by Pearson](#) and [Mondly by Pearson](#) – flexible English language learning solutions for your business.

3 Make sure your performance management is fair

As McKinsey has reported, a performance management system must feel fair, and that means ensuring that line managers have the correct tools and skills to deliver fair appraisals across the board.

Within the context of language learning, that might mean ensuring that an opportunity to develop [Workplace English](#) skills is offered to every employee, and not just specific people who have asked for it. A healthy culture of learning is one where managers feel supported and empowered to deliver performance appraisals that help everyone achieve their potential.

4 Constantly monitor and assess performance

A performance appraisal may only be held once a year, but language skills need to be monitored and developed all year round, with a continuous feedback loop built in. Language is a skill that needs to be practiced daily to consolidate learning and retain information. A baseline skill assessment can be achieved using a language test like [Versant by Pearson](#), to give you a clear indication of current language skill levels.

This can be complemented by an interactive language learning platform like [Mondly by Pearson](#) to build skills and work towards new goals. From here, you can set realistic goals for your employees to work towards, using each performance review as an opportunity to review progress.

The four-point performance management checklist

- Are individual language learning goals aligned with business priorities?
- Do managers feel equipped and supported to deliver fair and effective appraisals?
- Is suitable and progressive learning technology in place to support the learning process?
- Is progress monitored and assessed all year round?