



## Management and Performance Associates – January 2005

### A conversation to plan for the year ahead

As expected, 2004, like all other years, ended too fast. So did the holidays, they evaporated as snow evaporates from the ground. This means a new performance cycle has just started. The question is: Are you prepared?

Let's freeze the image for a moment: you have a pile of challenges in front of you, your team has a swinging mood and an expectation that "things will be different this year," big promises, originated in expressions of desire, cut budgets, pending appraisals, and most of all, a big question: where to start?

There are many alternatives to follow, but success is connected to organizing all of these unconnected issues around the **Performance Cycle**.

Since there is a lot to do and little time to lose, let's summarize it in four clear steps:

1. Set goals
2. Clarify performance expectations
3. Clarify the method for assessing performance
4. Determine if needed competencies are present, so as to meet goals and expectations.

**Goals:** You have heard it a thousand times, but you still do not believe it...Goals have to be SMART, meaning that the goals need to be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant to the business and Timely. A final tip: goals are not activities, but the end result.

**Expectations:** This is where most of the problems begin. People do tell their staff what to accomplish (the goals), but they

fail to clarify behavioral expectations. They wait one year to say (during the performance appraisal) "Yes, you have exceeded your goals, but..." This is frustrating and demotivating to the staff.

#### **Method for Assessing Performance:**

Everybody knows it is too hard and complicated, even boring, but, if well done, appraisals can be beneficial to both parties. The key message here is to explain the method now, not at the end of the year, when there is no chance to impact performance. Not all work has to be in your hands. Many Fortune 500 companies have understood and adopted the benefits of 360 assessments. The premise is simple: different people will have different perspectives.

**Required Competencies:** it is not fair to require competencies that your staff members do not have. If they are not present, and are required, help them to acquire them. Starting today. This will prevent another failure and disappointment in the future. How do you do it? Coaching. A final word of advice: Remember that people perform at their best when their tasks are aligned with their motivational profile.

Remember: this is just the beginning of the game; this is about clarifying the rules. To be successful we will have to support them with an open communication strategy, rewarding actions, and coaching to improve performance.



**See you next time. We welcome your feedback.**

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