

Ian Nelson: For me the appraisal interview is at the core of performance management, and you will hear and read a great deal during your studies about performance management.

The managing people competencies, for me, are appraisal, coaching, mentoring, and counselling. Appraisal interview pulls together the whole performance management process, so what happens is you're pulling together at the appraisal interview, the mission, the company or the organisation, the vision, the organisation's objectives for the next year or maybe longer, personal objectives, personal competencies, and the organisational change aspect of what's going on around about you, and what your contribution is towards the team.

So this is an opportunity once a year, and it usually is once a year, for an employee to get a clear understanding of the mission and vision of the company he's working for, the organisational objectives, which everybody is working towards, how those get translated into personal objectives and tasks and targets, you understand the personal competencies which you have to achieve, and, in many organisations now, the personal competencies are set within a whole competency structure, and, in fact, people can plan their own careers.

When I first was involved in industry many years ago, people had planners who decided your career for you, nowadays you can, in fact, in many large companies, plan out your own career and, indeed, managers have an obligation and a duty to help you, in fact, get an opportunity to learn those particular competencies.

The seventh dimension there is the one of the organisational change. I think people need to know what wider change is going on within an organisation in order to make sense of the contribution which, in fact, they are making.

Appraisal interview redefines and refocuses the job for another year, and the benefits that we get from that are rapid conversion of policy into focused achievement, personal development through feedback, reduction in mistakes and accidents, improvements in customer service and team work.

All managing people competencies share core skills, so that is appraisal, coaching, mentoring, and counselling, share the common skills of asking questions and listening. And, to me, these are the two most critical skills that any manager needs to learn, how, in fact, to ask meaningful questions which establish facts, which establish significance, and establish implications. And at the end of the chapter you will find a reference to a handbook produced by the Canadian Institute of Culture, which I think you will find very interesting.

And the other part of asking questions is listening. We hear noise and we find out ways of dealing with noise, but underneath noise are problems and underneath problems are feelings, and very often people never get to the problems and the feelings, all we ever hear is the noise and we learn ways of stopping that noise. And then if you have children, like I have, and I now have grandchildren, there are very quick and easy ways of stopping noise like, yes, we'll go swimming, but maybe you haven't got to the problem and maybe you haven't got to the feelings.