

Working for you in RBS Specialist Advice

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT LESS THAN 80%? – ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Following a message that was published by Senior Management in Specialist Advice on the 22nd August, UNITE have been deluged by calls and e-mails from Area Sales Managers and Financial Planning Managers who are members of UNITE regarding the issue of Performance Management.

ASMs and FPMs have reported a number of reoccurring themes across the business including:-

- All ASMs were advised on Wednesday 24th August that all FPMs, currently less than 80% of overall target as at week 33 must be given an Action Contract for 6 weeks, at which point performance must be at 100%
- ASMs have been advised that Action Contracts must be issued without exception and that failure to achieve the incremental improvement to 100% of target at the end of the 6 week period would lead to disciplinary action
- FPMs receiving Action Contracts in the post or handed the Action Contract, already completed, with no discussion regarding performance and the alleged underperformance
- FPMs with compelling reasons or circumstances for not currently achieving target, not having these circumstances considered, due to the lack of performance dialogue and having Action Contracts issued
- FPMs who have been issued and are working to informal coaching and support plans, have had these torn up and replaced with an Action Contract

Background

The Senior Management communication of the 22nd August stated "At this point, I want no-one to be under any illusion. If your performance is not where it should be, then you need to do everything you can to address it. As a management team, we are continuing to monitor and action on an individual basis. If performance is not at the specified levels, we will proactively manage this in line with our group performance management policies and ensure the appropriate interventions are put in

place". Despite the numerous reassurances that UNITE receive from the Group in respect of Performance Management and the Group maintaining that Performance Management is not a punitive tool, but a supportive mechanism to lift performance, there is no mention in this message of support from management or the Group. The message simply refers to monitoring, action and pro-actively managing performance, far from a constructive, positive or supportive process, the message and what has followed has been viewed across the Financial Planning Community as negative and punitive. Based upon the feedback received from ASMs & FPMs it then appears that a central diktat has been issued to all ASMs, that any FPM, sat at less than 80% of target at week 33, must be, without exception placed on to an Action Contract for 6 weeks.

Performance Management

Performance Management conducted correctly is positive, it enables an individual to perform well, receive pay rises, good incentive and bonus payments, which results in a well motivated employee who feels good about their performance and contribution, the employer in turn gets a good performing member of staff. Performance is personal to an individual, there will be different reasons for underperformance and different solutions/support required to facilitate a return to performance. The Group's Managing Performance Procedure states "Managers across the business must focus on clear and fair management of people's performance, based on assessing their performance against objectives and behaviours. Managers should use their judgement and will be held accountable for the fairness of their assessments of performance and for the quality of the conversations they have with their people". Underperformance should be raised with members at the earliest opportunity, so as genuine underperformance can be managed effectively.

If underperformance should be addressed at the earliest opportunity; it begs the question as to how issuing a central diktat that all FPMs performing at less than 80% at week 33 should be placed on an Action Contract meets this requirement. Equally if ASMs have been advised to issue Action Contracts without exception, thus removing their management discretion to manage performance, how can managers use their judgement or be accountable for the fairness of their assessments of performance, when the assessment on underperformance is someone else's? If FPMs are receiving Action Contracts in the post, as has been widely reported, or handed completed Action Contracts with little or no discussion, these actions do not represent clear and fair management of people's performance, based on assessing their performance against objectives and behaviours.

Issuing a central diktat in respect of a minimum performance standard of 80% and that all that fall beneath this standard will be placed on to an Action Contract completely undermines the Group's Performance Management process and renders it without credibility or authority. The approach adopted in Specialist Advice has also skipped a very important and critical part of the Performance Management process. Where underperformance has been identified, line management should have a detailed discussion with the member to establish the level of underperformance and the reasons for this. Where appropriate, the line manager should put in place some informal coaching and support to aid a return to performance, only where this has failed to succeed should the line manager then consider issuing an Action Contract. The reality appears to be that Specialist Advice have collectively by-passed a critical and crucial phase of the Reaching Performance Process, an action that renders their Performance Management approach flawed, unfair, punitive and inappropriate. This newsletter could cover numerous pages as to why the approach adopted in Specialist Advice is damaging and unreasonable; however the newsletter will turn to addressing what action members can and should take.

Next Steps

UNITE have published a number of articles and newsletters in the last couple of years regarding Performance Management and specifically around what became known as the Robust Performance Procedure and RBS' approach to what the Group term Serial Underperformers, i.e. any member of staff that has been a level 2 performer for two or more years. These newsletters are still available on the RBS pages of the UNITE website, www.unitetheunion.org and the advice is broadly unchanged. Rather than not signing an Action Contract, members should sign the document, but annotate it to say that you disagree with the Action Contract, the reasons for issuing it, its contents, length etc or the lack of dialogue regarding performance and the skipping of the stage of informal coaching and support.

Members should also immediately lodge grievances against the Action Contract, again citing the reasons why you disagree with the Action Contract and/or your alleged underperformance. If you are advised that you cannot lodge a grievance against your Action Contract, as some FPMs have, then this is simply a lie. It is important that a grievance is lodged without delay, as if any members wait until a disciplinary hearing is arranged to lodge a grievance, the bank can procedurally merge both processes and hear both the grievance and disciplinary hearing together.

Where the grievance has been lodged early enough, no disciplinary action for underperformance can be convened and heard until such time that the grievance and appeal have been concluded. In the event that a grievance and appeal are unsuccessful, with disciplinary action then taken, at the point that a further Action Contract is issued; members should follow the same process of annotating the Action Contract and raising grievances. Members of UNITE will be supported throughout the process and any members currently being subjected to this process can contact their local Workplace Reps, the UNITE RBS Helpline on **0870 241 4425** or e-mail **rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org**.

Unite Comment

In light of the amount of time and energy that RBS spends attempting to reverse UNITE's cynicism and scepticism regarding the Group's application of Reaching Performance Procedures and their prevailing mantra that it should be viewed positively and constructively, UNITE is bitterly disappointed at the one size fits all, ham fisted attempt at Performance Management within Specialist Advice. UNITE have repeatedly called upon the business to withdraw all the Action Contracts, have proper performance discussions with members that are underperforming and if the underperformance is genuine, enact the first phase of Performance Management i.e. informal coaching and support. These calls have been rejected, which has prompted this communication with our members in Specialist Advice.

The business have stated that they are clear that any Action Contracts are outlined in face-to-face meetings, giving both parties the opportunity to discuss the background and then agree on a plan to move the recipient to the required level of performance. The business have also stated that any deviation from this approach is unacceptable and managers have been reminded of their responsibilities, but the fact remains that the business have skipped a stage of the process and have, it appears issued a central diktat that all FPMs at less than 80% performance at week 33, must without exception be placed on an Action Contract, which removes the right of a manager to manage.

There is also an additional consequence of the Group's actions and that is rightly or wrongly, FPMs are perceiving that RBS are gearing up for FPM headcount reductions and the sharper focus on Performance Management is a means to reducing headcount through an alternative means to redundancy. Whilst this does appear to currently be merely speculation, as a business such a perception amongst staff must be of grave concern.

The reality is that FPMs are operating within a tough market place which is currently dictated by the on-going economic crisis, a crisis that RBS had a fair hand in, yet FPMs are being penalised for failing to operate in this market. UNITE will not sit idly and allow members within Specialist Advice be unfairly performance managed and disciplined, the union will do everything possible internally and externally to protect members from a punitive, one size fits all performance management agenda

Unite Representatives

UNITE concluded negotiations with RBS in late 2010 on a new and improved UNITE Representatives Agreement. We are always seeking members to take on one of the four UNITE Representative roles, i.e. Workplace, Union Learning, Safety and Equality. Any UNITE members interested in finding out more about becoming a UNITE Representative please contact the UNITE RBS Helpline or e-mail rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org.

UNITE RBS Updates & Update Your Details

If you would like to receive regular updates electronically from the union and have not already advised the union, please email from your preferred email address to rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org. It is also important that members ensure that their membership details are up to date and accurate, i.e. home address, workplace address, whether you are full time or part time etc. If you believe that your membership details are out of date, please also e-mail rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org with your updated details, alternatively you can contact your local District Office by phoning **0845 850 4242** or logging onto 'My UNITE' at the website www.unitetheunion.org where you can update your own details.

Not a Member?

Join UNITE's one and a half million members and have a voice on this and other issues, as well as receiving support, advice and representation for £11.48 a month for full time staff and £5.72 per month for part time staff working less than 21 hours a week. Membership forms can be obtained by phoning **0845 850 4242** or emailing rbsinfo@unitetheunion.org plus you can join on line at www.unitetheunion.org.



Alison Maclean & Stuart Davies – Joint Lead Officers

Unite RBS Helpline – 0870 241 4425