Monitoring individual performance

- Does each member of your team perform the tasks allocated to them?
- Does each member of your team perform to the standard required?
- What can you do to monitor performance without demotivating your team?

John Adair, a leading British writer on leadership, has developed a model he calls Action Centred Leadership. Adair says that leadership is about ensuring that you get three separate elements of the workplace working together effectively. These three elements are:

- people
- teams
- tasks

In other words, he is saying that leaders should make sure that people can play an active part in the team and work with others. They should also ensure that tasks are allocated to the right person and completed effectively.

In this session we will be focussing mainly on the ‘people’ element, but we will do so by looking at how they work together (the ‘team’ part) and how they get tasks done.
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The Action Centred Leadership ‘model’

A model is simply a way of saying a set of principles or rules that shape how we should behave. The Action Centred Leadership model (which we’ll call ACL from now on) has three elements, as we’ve seen. But what do they each mean?

- **Person** means that a leader needs to understand what skills and experience a team member has, what motivates them, how they feel about their work and what their personal and work goals are.

- **Team** means that a leader needs to be concerned about how people work together. Do they have good personal relationships? Do they recognise that they are part of a team and feel a strong sense of identity with the team? Do they support each other to ensure that the team does the work it should do to the right standard?

- **Task** means that a leader needs to be concerned about the various activities that the team members need to undertake. Are tasks allocated to the right people? Are people doing the work they should do? Are they producing goods and services to the required standard?

John Adair’s ACL model is often shown as three inter-locking circles, like this:

This emphasises that the three elements can’t be disentangled from each other and that a leader needs to be aware of all three and to think about them at the same time:

- “If I do this, how will it affect individuals, the team as a whole and the tasks they perform?”

Your role, in monitoring how individual’s perform, means looking at:

- how well they perform the tasks that have been allocated to them and achieve their personal goals.

- how well they contribute to the team, maintaining good relationships with other team members and helping to achieve team goals as well their own.
Monitoring individual performance

Task performance

Elsewhere in Building Success 2 you will learn about the importance of:

- allocating work to people on the basis of their knowledge and skills.
- setting goals for performing these tasks that reflect the team's objectives, in terms of the level of output required.
- individuals performing their tasks to meet the standards required to produce goods and services safely, efficiently and effectively.

Performance monitoring is about ensuring that people are:

- performing the tasks allocated to them (Are they doing what they should be doing?)
- achieving the output goals (Are they producing as much as they should be producing?)
- performing to the standard required (Are they doing it as well as they should?).

In some organisations the performance of team members will be closely monitored. It might be measured automatically by the equipment they use, or they may have to keep detailed records of what they are doing, or you may be expected to keep a close watch on them at work. Other organisations do not require detailed monitoring of individual performance, and expect team members to do what is expected without having to check up on them.

Exercise

How does your organisation approach performance monitoring? Is individual performance closely monitored? How is this done?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What effect do you think close monitoring has on people?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Monitoring individual performance

Monitoring and task performance

One of the most important features of effective leadership is that leaders are trusted and respected by those they lead. How do they earn this respect? There are a range of things that effective leaders do to earn the trust and respect of others, but one thing is to trust and respect them. Trust and respect creates trust and respect. Many people feel that close monitoring of their performance means that they aren’t trusted and respected.

Of course, someone who is new to the task will feel differently from someone who has been doing it for years. Someone who is new is more likely to need help and to make mistakes. Close monitoring enables them to get feedback on their performance. Feedback means that the person monitoring them is able to tell them what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. However, when people have been doing the job for years they feel that close monitoring isn’t to help them learn, it’s because they aren’t trusted.

Case Study

Bob is the team leader in a factory producing packaging. He leads a team in the warehouse. Two members of his team handle pallets of materials from the production line, while Bob and the other three members of his team pick items from the warehouse for despatch.

Because he is often busy loading vehicles for despatch he doesn’t have much chance to monitor the work of the two team members handling the incoming material. However, there is a system for recording every pallet that comes in, so that its contents and location can be kept on the stock control system. Everyday, Bob checks how many pallets have been stored and checks one or two to be certain that the location has been recorded accurately. If mistakes have been made, it can take a long time locating the missing items.

However, Phil, one of the team bringing in pallet loads of packaging from the production area stops and tells Bob that he finds this insulting. He points out that he has worked here for 15 years and he knows what he’s doing. Bob agrees but says that he is responsible for the work of the team and it’s his ‘head on the block’ if anything goes missing, which it sometimes does. What's more, he points out, some days when the production line is being changed, Phil and Tessa (who work with him) just seem to work more slowly so that they don't have to do anything else.
This case shows how Phil’s (and Tessa’s) behaviour has led Bob not to trust them completely. He probably feels that they don’t have a real commitment to the team. Teams are different from work groups. A work group is a group of people who happen to be led or managed by the same person. They all do different jobs and are responsible for how well they perform. If one person performs well or badly it has no impact on the rest of the team, unless they have to rely on an underperforming work colleague to do tasks before they can do theirs.

In a team, the team accepts responsibility for the whole range of tasks that need to be performed. Although people may specialise in some tasks rather than others, they help each other out if necessary. In reality, many work groups are nearly like teams, and some teams need to improve their teamworking. However, the idea of the team being jointly responsible for what is done is a major part of teamworking.

This is why performance monitoring should look at how people contribute to the team’s overall performance. In the case of Bob and Phil it is clear that Bob feels that Phil lacks real commitment to the team. He would like Phil or Tessa to come and say that they weren’t fully stretched and could they help out in despatch. That way he would trust them more and not feel he needed to monitor their performance as much.

In the session *Discipline and competence* you will learn about dealing with team members who fail to perform to the standard required. In the session *Dealing with poor working relationships* you will learn about dealing with problems between team members. However, not that many problems get so bad that they have to be treated as disciplinary or competence problems, or as ‘poor working relationships’. The problem team leaders are more likely to face is simply getting a team member to show some commitment to doing more than the basic requirements of the job.

People who show little enthusiasm for being committed members of the team can make it hard for everyone else. They can become free-loaders. A freeloader is someone who benefits from the hard work of the rest of the team without making an equal contribution. In that situation you need to look at their motivation. Motivation is a person’s willingness to do something without being made to do so. There is more about motivation in the sessions *Valuing people* and *Consulting people*. 
Most organisations, apart from the smallest, have some sort of appraisal or performance management system. Don’t get hung up on the labels. They are often the same thing, although they tend to differ in this way:

- Appraisal tends to be a method of reviewing someone’s performance and identifying what they have done well and what they have done badly (or less well). This is usually written down and may be used agree objectives, identify training and development needs, or possible career development.

- Performance management is similar but is more likely to have all these elements and also can be used to judge if people are eligible for bonuses or pay increases. The worst feature of performance management systems is when bonuses are limited and are awarded on the basis of who performs best. This means that good performance isn’t enough - you have to compete with others for bonuses. If people are supposed to be working in teams yet some will get rewards when others won’t, this runs counter to the whole idea of teamworking.

What they both have in common is that the performance appraisal usually happens every three, six or 12 months. But many team members would benefit from much more regular review.

Is there an alternative? There is, but it is far less structured, more individual and depends on the skills and integrity of the leader. It involves you regularly observing how people are performing and giving them informal feedback regularly. This way you can make sure that people are working as hard as they should be to complete tasks and to help the team achieve its goals. If they aren’t then you should be ready to do something. Monitoring is only of value if you take action when things aren’t right and give people praise and encouragement if they are performing well.

Of course, your employer may have formal performance management systems that you have to follow. That doesn’t stop you operating an informal system alongside to enable to you to ensure that the people you lead get the support and encouragement they need.
Of course, not everything is quite as easy as this. However, as a team leader, you have responsibility for ensuring that each team member performs the tasks allocated to them. You are also responsible for ensuring that quality, efficiency and safety standards are observed. Above all, you are responsible for making sure that the team as whole produces what is required. Performance monitoring is all about ensuring that this happens. However, by keeping it low key and by involving people in the process, you can use it to improve performance and motivate people. This is better than making people feeling that they are being checked up on, and making them demotivated.

Case Study

Bob decides to sit down with Phil and Tessa one day when the warehouse isn’t too busy. He says that he knows they don’t like him checking up on them, but he doesn’t like it when the despatch team are busy and they are able to take work easy. However, he is willing to try something different.

He knows that they are both reliable, but everyone makes mistakes occasionally. He needs to be sure that they don’t make too many. What he’d like them to do is to check their own work. At the end of each day he’d like them each to check a couple of pallets that they had brought into the warehouse. All he asks is that they make a note of which ones they were and what they found.

They would sit down at the end of every month and look at the results. As long as the errors were kept at the present low level (which was about two or three a week), then there was no real problem. If they could get it below that it would be fantastic.

In return for him trusting them to check their own work, all he asked was that one of them came to the despatch area when their workload was light, and help out with the rest of the team. Phil and Tessa were both happy with that.
Complete the following exercises. Refer back to the session if necessary.

A. John Adair’s Action Centred Leadership model identifies three aspects of performance that leaders need to focus on. What are these?
   1. __________
   2. __________
   3. __________

B. What are the three main aims of performance monitoring?
   1. __________________________________________________________________________
   2. __________________________________________________________________________
   3. __________________________________________________________________________

C. Read the following statements, Circle the number of the correct one.
   1. Close monitoring of someone new to the job enables a team leader to:
      a. make sure they don’t try to steal anything.
      b. provide feedback on their performance.
      c. show them that you won’t let them mess about.
   2. People who have been employed for some time may respond to close monitoring by:
      a. showing resentment because they will feel they aren’t trusted.
      b. showing off how good they are.
      c. ignoring the team leader.
   3. Freeloaders are people who:
      a. volunteer to work for nothing.
      b. benefit from the hard work of others.
      c. work hard for the benefit of others.
Phantasy Park is a theme park based on superheroes. There are rides and entertainments for adults and children of all ages. The various activities in the park are looked after by teams. Beverley is a team leader on the Super-ride. Her team's job is to look after the people who are queuing for the ride, make sure that people are strapped in properly and to release them at the end.

There is a lot of pressure on the team, especially at holiday periods when people can queue for up to two hours. The team has to work hard to keep people happy. They have a system of handing out place-holders, numbered 'beepers' that can be used to call people back if they have to wait for more than 30 minutes.

The team have to check that people return in time when they are 'bleeped'. Beverley has noticed that when John, one of her team, is handing them out, people are far more likely to be late coming back or complain that the bleeper didn't sound. This can cause all sorts of problems and disputes, because if people are too late then they may have to be pushed back in the queue and wait longer.

- What could Beverley do to monitor John’s performance?

- Beverley decides that she will work with John for a day on queue management. She notices that John is very careless about telling people to come back within ten minutes of the bleeper going off. He doesn’t tell them to keep within a certain area or they will be out of range. What should Beverley do now?
How well do you use the skills in this session?

- Do you monitor how well individuals perform tasks and contribute to the team?
- Do you give people feedback on their performance?

1. Read the list of skills. Tick the boxes to show your strengths and weaknesses.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>strengths &lt;-&gt; weaknesses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm good at this</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I'm quite good at this</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I'm not so good at this</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm quite poor at this</td>
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- monitoring team members’ performance
- providing feedback to reward good performance and help improve poor performance
- taking action when performance is below standard

2. Do you want to improve any of these skills?

3. How do you plan to improve the skills you listed in question 2? (You might want to discuss this with your line manager or your tutor/mentor/coach.)