Make sure people in your business can do their work

People are the most important asset in any business whether they are directly employed or not. Getting the right people, training them and helping them improve their performance is therefore a vital part of setting up a business and of its continuing successful development.

This involves making sure that you:

1. set performance targets for people in your business
2. monitor people's performance
3. deal with poor performance

What you need to do

- plan how people will undertake their work, identifying any priorities or critical activities and making best use of the available resources
- set targets for people that explain what they do and how they need to perform
- explain the targets to the people involved and how their work will be assessed
- allocate work to individual people on a fair basis taking account of their skills, knowledge, understanding, experience, workloads and the opportunity for development
- brief people on the work they have been allocated and the standard or level of expected performance
- encourage people to ask questions, make suggestions and seek clarification in relation to the work they have been allocated
- check the quality of work on a regular and fair basis against the standard or level of expected performance
- give clear and prompt feedback on performance and say how they can improve
- recognise and reward success
- promptly identify any poor performance and bring it directly to the attention of the person concerned
- give people the opportunity to discuss any actual or potential problems affecting their performance
- discuss these issues at a time and place appropriate to the type, seriousness and complexity of the problem

- use information collected on the performance of individuals in any formal appraisal process
- decide whether people would benefit from training
- where necessary refer people to relevant support services
- maintain respect for the individual and the need for confidentiality
- keep records of personal details and performance strictly confidential

What you need to know and understand

Staff performance

- how to plan the work required of people effectively, taking due account of health and safety issues in the planning, allocation and checking of work

- why it is important to set targets for the standard or level of expected performance

- what type of performance targets can be set. (For example skills, competence, productivity, quality and customer response.)

- how to explain performance targets. (For example face-to-face or in writing)

- how to regularly and fairly assess the progress and quality of work. (For example observing, discussing and getting feedback from others, including customers and other relevant people.)

- why it is important to brief people on the work they have been allocated and the standard or level of expected performance and how to do so

- how to provide constructive feedback to individuals that will help them improve what they do

- how to enable and encourage people to ask questions, seek clarification, make suggestions and talk frankly about their problems

- how to make sure that people understand that any criticisms you make are about their work and not about them personally

- why it is important to identify unacceptable or poor performance and how to discuss the cause and agree ways of improving performance with them

- what type of problems and unforeseen events may occur and how to support people in dealing with them

- how to agree and follow up a course of action with the individual concerned

- how to log information on the ongoing performance of people and use this information for performance appraisal purposes

- what records to keep and who should see them in order to maintain confidentiality

Information and advice

- what support services there are that you can refer people to

Business relationships

- how to maintain respect for the individual

- what the boundaries are beyond which you should not get involved in the individual's problem

Motivating individuals

- how to motivate individuals by recognising and rewarding success. (For example praise, recognition in front of colleagues, rewards, benefits, pay rises.)

Laws and regulations

- what the specific legislation, regulations, guidelines, codes of practice are that are related to carrying out the work

- what the requirements are for developing or maintaining knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities relevant to the industry