



Performance Management For Dummies

Herman Aguinis

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1 | A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT THE FOR DUMMIES SERIES

Before discussing Herman Aguinis' book, *Performance Management for Dummies*, I would like to put the book into context. The For Dummies series has become a well-recognized series of books that are informative and concise. The series began with the publication of *DOS for Dummies* in 1991 and the book showed millions of people how understand their computer's operating system, and then the second book, *Macs for Dummies*, showed them how to use their new computers (Dummies.com, n.d.).

At first, the books were inspired by the need for people to understand emerging technologies. But computer manuals were boring, technical, and just not very fun to read. The inspiration for the series was simple: To alleviate the anxiety and frustration people were experiencing at the time with technology by making challenging material entertaining. The formula was a success with over 150 million books sold on 1,000 titles, translated into over 30 languages. The topics are wildly varied and include lawn care, golf, women in the Bible, Excel, auto repair, wedding planning, digital photography, Sudoku, bathroom remodeling, and Sarbanes-Oxley to mention a few (Donadio, 2006).

I realize that a lot of people do not take the Dummies books seriously. If you look at the history of the Dummies books, some bookstores refused to carry them when they were first introduced because of the title, and the garish yellow covers (Donadio, 2006). History also shows that they were wrong. Here is why: The books are written by experts who demystify complex subject matter. For example, Dr. Alan Rubin, a San Francisco endocrinologist, wrote *Diabetes for Dummies*, which is the No. 1 title in the Dummies health category. These books are no joke. The editors at For Dummies found a well-known expert in Herman Aguinis to write the book on performance management. One of Aguinis' main topics of research is talent management. He is one of the most influential business and economics researchers in the world. Performance management is one of the most challenging parts of a manager's job, and Aguinis' research, teaching, and consulting support that he knows how to do it right.

2 | WHAT IS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Performance management "deals with the challenge organizations face in defining, measuring, and stimulating employee performance with the ultimate goal to improve organizational performance" (den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2004, p. 556). Aguinis clearly points out that part of the problem is that performance management and performance appraisal have become confounded, and he addresses this problem. For example, a table in Chapter 1 clearly shows the differences—performance management is every manager's job (not the HR department's job) and is strategic. It is about providing ongoing feedback rather than completing a form once a year. Performance management is past, present, and future. It is about employee development rather than documentation. This careful decoupling of employee development versus bureaucratic form completion sets the stage for the rest of the book. The For Dummies version provides practical guidelines that will help managers overcome their disdain for performance management.

3 | WHY MANAGERS HATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The subject of performance management fits the goals of the For Dummies genre. Managing employee performance generates anxiety for managers. In fact, Aguinis has noted that managers hate the process and employees find it ineffective (Aguinis, Joo, & Gottfredson, 2011). The topic is important and comes at a time when there is debate among practicing managers and scholars about whether organizations should abandon performance appraisals (Adler et al., 2016). But Aguinis tackles this matter early in the book—on page 8 he acknowledges media headlines such as “performance management is dead” but states that “... the evaluation of performance is not going away” (Aguinis, 2019, p. 8). He makes a clear case for this. For example, he presents a table where the reader is asked to imagine an organization without performance management, and lists eight things managers cannot do without it. So the emergence of *Performance Management for Dummies* is timely—but like other For Dummies books and their respective topics, could this book make performance management fun?

4 | HOW CAN A BOOK FOR DUMMIES IMPROVE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT?

First, the book is grounded in solid research on performance management. Aguinis has written that there is a gap between science and practice in this area and that research must be translated into practice (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008). This book extends this translation and provides evidence-based guidelines for managers based on classic and current research. To some scholars, it may be a bit jarring that there are no references in the text or at the end of the book. But there is no doubt that the content is based on research. For example, Aguinis describes what researchers know is a meta-analysis: “a study consisting of a review of 30 separate investigations concluded that team rewards are more potent in smaller compared to larger teams” (Aguinis, 2019, p. 267). It is this translation of data to practice that makes this book so unique. It is important to keep the intended audience in mind for the book—the manager who is looking for practical guidance on how to best manage employee performance.

Second, the book is fun to read. Tables, figures, and boxed items appear on nearly every page. It has examples that readers will find relevant. For example, Chapter 9 has a feature on Measuring Competencies at Xerox Capital Services that demonstrates the importance of identifying leadership competencies and how they are used in performance management. Throughout the book, icons highlight tips, key points to remember, examples, warnings, and active-learning exercises or self-assessments. For example, one active-learning icon has managers rate the utility and social-awareness goals of their current system that two sets of questions on a scale of 1–5 (Aguinis, 2019, p. 119). The warning icons are attention grabbers. For example, Aguinis points out the use of multiple sources of feedback might backfire (Aguinis, 2019, p. 232). And the book has lots of “fun facts.” For example, performance management was found in the Wei Dynasty in China, in which was implemented a nine-rank system for government employees (Aguinis, 2019, p. 13). Who knew?

Third, the organization of the book makes sense. Part 1 makes the case for performance management. Following an introductory chapter that makes a clear case for why a manager needs performance management to succeed, Chapter 2 furthers that case by describing the purposes of performance management from strategy to documentation. Chapter 3 provides the nuts-and-bolts of how to design an effective performance-management system. For example, the section on “Becoming an Effective Coach” provides the success factors for becoming a great coach, followed by guidelines for providing effective feedback. Chapter 4 addresses possible negative outcomes and what do about them. For example, the chapter has a section on how to set up an appeals process to resolve disagreements. Part 2 shows the reader how to design the system. Chapter 5 focuses on linking the performance-management system to the organization’s strategic goals (the big picture). Chapter 6 goes into more detail on how to become an effective performance coach. This part has a heavy dose of defining and measuring performance (chapters 7 through 9) and chapter 10 discusses the use of management analytics. This chapter provides useful examples of performance-management forms,

and lists eight critical characteristics of forms. Some of the chapters deal with more technical issues in performance management such as minimizing distortion errors (chapter 11). While this is a complex topic, it is explained clearly in a way that managers can grasp the importance of reducing overrating and underrating of performance.

Part 3 of the book most clearly distinguishes performance management from performance appraisal. This part discusses the creation of personal-development plans, how to fire someone, team-performance management, and evaluating the system (chapters 12–15). Part 4 reviews the relevant legal issues related to performance management (chapters 16–18). Part 5 (chapters 19–21) provides even more reasons for implementing performance management, delivering results, and becoming a great performance-management leader. The three chapters in this part are organized around 10 factors and provide a useful summary for the key points in the book.

The For Dummies title might be a bit misleading. I would not say this book is for dummies; it is grounded in solid research and tackles complex issues such as cognitive biases and legal issues in performance management. But it does so in a manner that is accessible and understandable. It is enjoyable to read, while providing clear guidelines for practice. With 21 chapters, this is a comprehensive treatment of performance management. In the end, the book succeeds in bridging the scientist-practitioner gap in performance management in a way that may be beneficial for other topics in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Perhaps we should take a lesson from the Dummies.

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Application Performance Management For Dummies, Riverbed Special Edition, introduces you to application performance management (APM) solutions and how these tools can help you monitor and trouble-shoot your mission-critical applications from the perspective of your users, as well as your systems. About This Book. UC&C Performance Management For Dummies, NETSCOUT Special Edition . However, when IT teams have access to the same performance management tools and indisputable actionable intelligence, the "blame game" ends and problem solving begins. A comprehensive, vendor independent UC&C performance management solution can help IT teams improve communications and collaboration among themselves, leading to a more efficient IT organization and a more productive business. Performance Management For Dummies is the definitive guide to infuse performance management with your organization's strategic goals and priorities. It provides the nuts and bolts of how to define and measure performance in terms of what employees do (i.e., behaviors) and the outcome of what they do (i.e., results) -- both for individual employees as well as teams. Inside, you'll find a new multi-step, cyclical process to help you keep track of your employees work, identify where they need to improve and how, and ensure they're growing with the organization--and helping the organization succeed. Performance Management For Dummies is the definitive guide to infuse performance management with your organization's strategic goals and priorities. It provides the nuts and bolts of how to define and measure performance in terms of what employees do (i.e., behaviors) and the outcome of what they do (i.e., results) -- b Implement best-in-class performance management systems. Performance Management For Dummies is the definitive guide to infuse performance management with your organization's strategic goals and priorities. It provides the nuts and bolts of how to define and measure per...