Why read this book?

As a learning and development consultant I have met with clients who have a performance problem and they tell me they want me to design and deliver a training programme to solve it. Further questioning reveals that a training course is not going to solve the problem.

For some Learning and Development and Human Resource professionals, it can be tempting to take such requests at face value, and design and deliver, or commission the design and delivery of, a training programme. This approach does not serve the Learning and Development/Human Resource professional or the organisation in the long run.

For Learning and Development/Human Resources the approach undermines the credibility, impact and influence of the functions. For the organisation it costs time, money and increased frustration of managers and employees when the training course does not solve the performance problem.

One of the reasons Learning and Development/ Human Resource professionals identify a training course as a way of dealing with a performance problem is that they do not know of a different way.

This book gives them a different way. It gives them a 'field guide' (Karly Olsen-Haveland) to handle training requests differently, and in a way that is much more likely to deal with any performance problem.

The book would also be useful reading for anyone in the workplace who is interested in workplace performance and how it can be achieved.

Chapter 1 - Survive and Thrive with Capability
This chapter starts with a quote that encapsulates the focus of the book: - 'We are in the performance business, not the knowledge-gain business. The learning leaders who understand the difference are the ones who succeed'.

The purpose of capability is to achieve performance. The first part of the chapter discusses what capability is, the difference between competence and capability and the components of capability.
Why capability is so important is discussed in some detail, with reference to several research studies and reports.

In achieving capability the role of training is assessed. In a section entitled 'Training does not breed good performance' the author presents his argument that using training as a response to poor performance is often a flawed approach. The author summarises what is required by the performer to perform at the point of work.

Chapter 2 – Changing Your Perspective
In this chapter the author firstly identifies a common approach to an issue in workplace performance - that the Learning and Development (L and D) or Human Resources (HR) team are told about workplace performance not being achieved and instructed to deal with it through a training intervention.

The problems inherent with organisations taking this approach are identified. The author advocates viewing the organisation as a system. In the section 'taking a systems view of the organisation', different levels of workplace performance are identified. The author offers recommendations on how to improve performance using a systems approach.

Chapter 3 - The new role for Learning and Development
This chapter focuses on what the role of L and D should be in 'creating an organisation that focuses on performance.'

The first step is to ensure that the L and D practitioner is focusing on performance as the 'ultimate endgame'. The author asserts the current focus of most L and D functions is on identifying ways to manage learning problems not on performance problems. Instead L and D needs to service their customers and 'solve (their customers) problems'. To do this the L and D functions needs to 'look beyond what (customers) are asking for and understand their world and what they need.'

The chapter stresses the need to be a performance consultant and identifies ways to do this. To increase their influence the L and D function needs to use the language of business and have business skills and knowledge. Ways to do this are outlined.

The final section of the chapter stresses the importance of brand and credibility for L and D and identifies ways this can be achieved.

Chapter 4 – The components of Capability
This chapter examines 'exactly what constitutes capability'. Five components are identified that impact on capability and all five interact as a system:-

Knowledge
Knowledge required for a task, which may be required from memory or could be sourced from the environment
Skills
Skill is defined as 'some behaviour that requires practice in order to be done well'. Issues impacting on skills being utilised are identified
Mind-set
Mind-set includes things such as confidence, motivation, attitude, courage, tenacity. Engagement is identified as the foundation that is under many of the factors. Mind-set and engagement and the factors that affect them are discussed.
Physiology
'Physiology is a statement of capability'. Someone who is physiologically incapable of doing a task cannot perform.
Environment
Unlike the previous 4 components of capability, which are 'attached' to the worker, environment is independent of the worker. The author asserts that the environment is responsible for 'well over half, and in some cases almost all, of the performance problems'. Several environmental issues that impact on performance and what needs to be considered in each issue, to manage it are identified.

Chapter 5 – Performance Consultancy Process
This chapter covers the process that is required to go through to understand the issues that are impacting on performance.

The chapter opens with definitions of consultant and consultancy. The circumstances of people requiring consultancy support are outlined. The different roles in the process and the required behaviour and approach of the consultant are identified. The stages of the consultancy intervention are detailed.

Firstly the stimulus that makes the client realise they need an intervention.
In response to the client realising there is an issue, the L and D professional has different options. One option is using a performance consultancy process to develop an understanding of the root cause, of performance problem, and creating some solutions that are likely to work. This process has three distinct stages that are detailed in the subsequent three chapters:-
- Getting the meeting
- The meeting
- After the meeting

The rationale for following this process is stated and several benefits of using a performance consultancy approach for the L and D professional and the organisation are identified.

Chapter 6 - Stage 1 – Getting the meeting
The purpose of this chapter is to identify how to get a meeting arranged to discuss a performance problem. 'The primary outcome of this first stage is to convince the problem holder that they need to spend some time with you in a face-to-face meeting'. An approach to enable this outcome is described in detail. Strategies to deal with objections and potential roadblocks are also identified.

Chapter 7 – Stage 2 – What to do in the meeting
'The primary outcome of the second stage is to align the wants of the problem holder with their actual needs'. This chapter describes how to achieve this. Each stage in the process is covered including getting clarity on the problem, identifying the behaviour gap, clarifying the benefits of solving the problem – the value of success.

How to identify the other people involved, other stake holders, potential and actual barriers to performance and solutions are also covered. The chapter concludes with recommendations on how to move forward, and actions post meeting.

Chapter 8 – Stage 3 – After the Meeting
The primary outcomes of this third stage are to complete the diagnostics, agree the solution to be used and start taking actions – how 'the performance consultancy process will morph into a project management process.'

The chapter outlines the key issues to manage to achieve these objectives. This includes getting input and support from stakeholders who include the performers, managers of the problem holders, people in other operational areas impacted. There is a need for identifying solution costs. Finally the factors that need to be considered in the next meeting are outlined.

Chapter 9 – The Role of the Manager
This chapter focuses on the role of the manager in enabling capability at work.
The chapter firstly identifies the impact the direct supervisor/manager has on the performance of the employee. Strategies to enable and support managers to be able to manage the capability of their employees are detailed.

The chapter defines performance management, describes a performance management process, and identifies what is required to manage performance effectively. 16 reasons for non-performance are listed. The difference between performance management and capability management is explained. How mangers can manage capability is the final part of the chapter.

Conclusion – Towards a Performance Culture
The final chapter focuses on how to achieve a performance culture.

There is a definition of culture. How culture operates in organisations and the issues impacting are identified. The chapter examines how a focus on capability management can be part of a wider programme that is designed to change organisational culture to one where good performance is 'the way we do things round here'. Factors that enable good performance are identified.

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About the Reviewer - Krista Powell Edwards

Krista is a very experienced and highly qualified consultant, coach, facilitator, trainer and author. She uses her experience and expertise to support individuals and organisations to enhance their effectiveness and performance.

Krista is currently writing her first book on how to effectively communicate credibility.

Expertise and experience

Krista has developed her expertise through

- An extensive track record of supporting organisations in the UK and internationally since 1995.
- Masters level research in the factors that affect the achievement of workplace performance.
- Extensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD), (including regular attendance at conferences and development programmes).
- Research of 'best practice' consultancy, facilitation and learning and development
- Qualifying as a Master Trainer, Master Practitioner and Practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).
- Designing and delivering 500+ training and development programmes.
- 20+ years as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) volunteer - branch chair, council representative - supporting the CPD and performance of 7500+ HR professionals.
- Lecturing at a university (International Human Resource Management).

Specialist areas

Krista specialises in three main areas:-

Credibility   -   How to communicate credibility for influence and positive impact in the workplace
Credible HR   -   Enabling HR to add value to the organisation
Personal Effectiveness Skills - Support in developing confidence, credibility, influence, time management and assertiveness and conflict management skills so that individuals and teams are able to perform effectively.

Services

Krista offers support in **workplace performance improvement**.
Tailored, cost effective
- Consultancy and Research
- Coaching
- Facilitation
- Training and Development

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