Why yesterday’s performance reviews are failing today’s teams - Training Journal

Source: gnews-performance-management | **Published:** June 24, 2026 | **PMS Relevance:** PMS CORE | **Type:** Opinion/Commentary | **Geography:** Global

Source URL: https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiugFBVV95cUxPTlJjT2pVTG1MNHctV0lIT25TNmt

Executive Summary

This article, authored by Steve Macaulay and Sarah Cook, addresses the perceived inadequacy of annual performance review cycles in contemporary organisational contexts characterised by rapid change, distributed teams, and evolving workforce expectations. The authors argue that performance management has shifted — or should shift — from a compliance-driven, episodic process to a continuous, development-focused dialogue embedded in day-to-day management. Key evidence is drawn from four high-profile corporate examples — Adobe, General Electric, Microsoft, and Deloitte — each cited as having transitioned away from annual appraisals toward more frequent, feedback-rich models, with claimed outcomes including improved engagement, reduced administrative burden, and stronger retention. The authors identify coaching capability in managers as a critical enabler, and highlight risks including feedback overload, cultural resistance, and inconsistency in application. The article concludes by framing performance management as a strategic lever for HR and L&D professionals, presenting three practitioner imperatives centred on continuity, coaching, and fairness. No original empirical data is presented; the piece draws on widely circulated organisational case studies and practitioner consensus rather than peer-reviewed evidence.

Key Insights

1. The article positions continuous performance management — characterised by frequent check-ins, real-time feedback, and ongoing goal-setting — as a replacement for the traditional annual review cycle, citing stronger engagement and retention outcomes.

2. Manager capability is identified as a pivotal variable: the shift from evaluator to coach is framed as essential to making continuous performance management function effectively, requiring deliberate skills development supported by HR and L&D.

3. The article highlights that fairness and bias mitigation — including recency bias, halo/horns effects, and affinity bias — are structural risks in any evaluation system, and that calibration, transparency, and multi-source input are cited as mitigating mechanisms.

Practical Takeaways

• Organisations deploying continuous performance management are described as integrating goal-setting, feedback, and recognition into regular workflow rhythms rather than concentrating these activities at year-end, a pattern associated in the article with reduced administrative burden and improved employee clarity.

• Structured feedback models — specifically AID, SBI, and COIN — are presented in the article as tools for giving managers a consistent conversational framework, intended to support more timely and specific developmental dialogue.

Frameworks Mentioned

SMART Goals — A goal-setting methodology referenced alongside outcomes-based approaches and OKRs as a means of co-creating employee objectives linked to organisational strategy.

OKRs — Objectives and Key Results, cited as one option among co-created goal-setting approaches used to connect individual work to broader organisational priorities.

360-Degree Review — Multi-source feedback methodology referenced both as a tool Microsoft adopted and as one that Deloitte moved away from, illustrating divergent organisational approaches to evaluation.

AID — Action–Impact–Do: a structured feedback model listed as a tool to help managers give clear, consistent feedback in developmental conversations.

SBI Feedback Model — Situation–Behaviour–Impact: a structured feedback framework cited as one of several models that can provide managers with a consistent conversational structure.

COIN — Context–Observation–Impact–Next Steps: a structured feedback model presented as a tool for managers to use in performance conversations.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The article synthesises widely recognised practitioner themes in a coherent and accessible manner. The inclusion of concrete corporate examples (Adobe, GE, Microsoft, Deloitte) grounds abstract principles in recognisable organisational contexts. The acknowledgment of implementation risks — feedback overload, cultural resistance, inconsistency, short-termism — reflects a degree of intellectual balance uncommon in purely promotional writing. The structured presentation of feedback models (AID, SBI, COIN) adds operational specificity. Limitations: The article presents no original empirical data. All stated outcomes from the corporate case studies — improved engagement, stronger retention, reduced burden — are asserted without citations, quantification, or source attribution, making them unverifiable. The causal link between continuous performance management and these outcomes is assumed rather than demonstrated. The article conflates correlation with causation throughout. The four corporate examples are among the most frequently recycled in HR practitioner literature and represent large, well-resourced organisations, limiting generalisability to smaller or less mature organisations. Biases: Both authors are affiliated with consultancy and executive development organisations (Cranfield Executive Development and The Stairway Consultancy), which creates a structural interest in promoting the frameworks and training investments the article advocates. The article is written in an advocacy register despite a nominal neutrality of tone, consistently framing continuous performance management as superior without presenting contradictory evidence or contexts where annual reviews may remain appropriate.

Organizational Practice

The article describes four organisations — Adobe, General Electric, Microsoft, and Deloitte — as having replaced annual performance reviews with continuous models. Adobe introduced 'Check-Ins' as frequent informal dialogues with real-time feedback. GE adopted a digital-first model (PD@GE) enabling year-round objective tracking and frequent feedback. Microsoft implemented ongoing check-ins, performance journals, and 360-degree feedback. Deloitte replaced annual reviews and traditional 360 tools with real-time feedback and development-focused coaching. The article also describes a general practitioner model involving calibration sessions, co-created goals, structured feedback conversations, and manager coaching skills training as components of contemporary performance management systems.

Strategic Implications

The article reflects a broader practitioner consensus that annual review cycles are being deprioritised in favour of continuous feedback architectures, with implications for how HR functions design evaluation infrastructure, allocate L&D investment toward manager coaching capability, and construct fairness mechanisms. The emphasis on psychological safety, equity, and wellbeing alongside performance signals an integrative framing in which performance management intersects with culture and retention strategy. The identification of implementation risks — particularly inconsistency across teams and feedback overload — points to execution complexity as a material variable in determining whether continuous models deliver on their stated aims.

Validation Status: passed
