

6 Areas of Improvement at Work for Performance Reviews

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Executive Summary

This article, published by Leapsome, addresses how performance reviews in 2026 can be structured to identify and support employee development across six defined focus areas. The author's central argument is that career development has become a retention imperative, particularly as Gen Z — projected to become the largest working generation by 2035 — increasingly prioritizes professional growth. The article presents six areas of improvement: industry knowledge and professional development (with an emphasis on AI upskilling), teamwork and collaboration, communication and feedback, leadership and people management, time management, and conflict resolution. Evidence is drawn from cited statistics — including that 67% of Gen Z employees prioritize career development and that 60% of executives expect AI to disrupt core business operations — alongside quotes from practitioners and authors. The article concludes by linking each improvement area to actionable approaches, many of which involve Leapsome's own product suite. Implications drawn are that structured, development-focused performance reviews tied to specific competency frameworks improve both employee growth and organizational retention.

Key Insights

1. Career development is framed as a retention driver, with the article citing that employees who lack a visible growth path are likely to leave.
2. Gen Z is cited as comprising over a quarter of the current workforce and is projected to become the largest working generation by 2035, with 67% reportedly prioritizing career development.
3. AI upskilling is positioned as non-uniform — its relevance and application vary significantly by department and role, requiring tailored development planning rather than blanket training initiatives.

Practical Takeaways

- Performance reviews structured around six defined competency areas — industry knowledge, collaboration, communication, leadership, time management, and conflict resolution — provide a consistent evaluation framework across diverse employee profiles.
- Micro development plans targeting specific, near-term skills are presented as more actionable than long-term development plans, particularly for employees with focused or limited growth goals.

Frameworks Mentioned

360-Degree Review — A feedback methodology referenced in the context of teamwork and collaboration, where input is gathered from multiple stakeholders including peers, managers, and direct reports.

Radical Candor — A communication philosophy developed by Kim Scott, cited in the article as a model for honest yet respectful workplace feedback, with an emphasis on collaboration over coercion and individuality over conformity.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management Model — A conflict resolution framework referenced as a tool to help employees assess disagreements from a broader perspective and collaboratively identify solutions.

Interest-Based Relational Approach — A conflict resolution methodology cited alongside the Thomas-Kilmann model as a structured approach for navigating workplace disagreements respectfully.

Pomodoro Technique — A time management method mentioned as a resource for employees who struggle with prioritization and task completion.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The six-area framework is logically organized, internally consistent, and broadly applicable across industries and employee levels. The inclusion of specific statistics and named external sources (Forbes, Kim Scott, Lisa Daniels, Lauren Romero) adds surface-level credibility. The acknowledgment of neurodiversity in the time management section (referencing ADHD) reflects a degree of inclusivity in framing. **Limitations:** The article does not cite the original research behind its statistics — for example, the 67% Gen Z career development figure and the 60% executive AI disruption figure lack direct source attribution within the body text, with only a general Forbes 2025 footnote provided. The six areas are presented as a 'helpful framework' without empirical validation of their comprehensiveness or effectiveness. **Biases:** The article is produced by Leapsome, a commercial HR software vendor, and multiple improvement suggestions explicitly direct readers to Leapsome products (Leapsome Learning, Leapsome Reviews, Instant Feedback). This creates a clear commercial conflict of interest. External practitioner quotes are selectively chosen to support the article's premise rather than present a balanced academic perspective. The overall structure functions as a content marketing piece with a practitioner guide format.

Organizational Practice

The article describes performance review processes structured around six competency areas, with development plans created collaboratively between managers and employees. Practices referenced include micro development planning, cross-departmental collaboration initiatives, active listening training, 360-degree feedback cycles, team-building activities, and empathy mapping exercises. Leadership development practices include assigning aspiring leaders to manage projects under mentorship.

Strategic Implications

The article reflects a broader industry trend toward development-centric performance management, where reviews are repositioned from evaluative events to growth-planning conversations. The emphasis on Gen Z preferences signals that PMS design is increasingly shaped by generational workforce composition. The integration of AI upskilling into performance review frameworks suggests organizations are beginning to embed technology literacy as a core competency alongside traditional interpersonal and leadership skills. The article also reflects a market trend toward continuous feedback mechanisms as supplements to periodic review cycles.

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