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Personal Development Plans: insights from a case based approach.

Abstract

Purpose: In light of contemporary shifts away from annual appraisals, this study explores the implications of using a personal development plan (PDP) as a means of focussing on continuous feedback and development to improve individual performance and ultimately organisational performance.

Research Methods: Data were collected through an employee survey in one private sector organisation in the UK finance sector using a case study approach. Secondary data in the form of completed PDP's was used to compare and contrast responses to the survey.

Findings: Results indicate that the diagnostic stage is generally effective but support for the PDP and development activity post diagnosis is less visible. Implications of this are that time spent in the diagnostic stage is unproductive and could impact motivation and self-efficacy of employees. Furthermore, for the organisation to adopt a continuous focus on development via PDPs would necessitate a systematic training programme to effect a change in culture.

Research limitations: This study was limited to one organisation in one sector which reduces the generalisability of results. Research methods were limited to anonymous survey and a richer picture would be painted following qualitative interviews. There was also a subconscious bias towards believing that a PDP containing documented goals would lead to improved individual and organisation perspectives but the discussion has identified the concept of sub conscious priming which indicates verbal goals may equally be valid and further comparative research between verbal and written goals is recommended.

Practical implications: The results indicate the potential value that using PDPs could bring to an organisation as an alternative to annual appraisal subject to a supportive organisational culture.

Originality/value: PwC, in a recent article for CIPD (2015) reported that two thirds of large companies are planning to rethink their annual appraisal system. One of the key drivers for this was the desire for more regular feedback. Given the recent shift in thinking little research has been conducted into what would replace annual appraisal. This paper therefore focuses on the extent to which PDPs can contribute to supporting this more regular contact and feedback.

Keywords: Personal development plan (PDP), Annual Appraisal, Workplace learning, Management Training and Development, Human Resource Development, Performance Management.

Introduction

Performance management is seen as a means of implementing strategic initiatives and managing the development of employees in order to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Campbell, Coff and Kryscynski (2012) focus on maintaining competitive advantage through human capital and place this at the core of a resource based view of organisations. Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002) having studied twenty organisations undergoing change, had already highlighted that knowledge creation was key to competitive advantage. Campbell *et al* (2012) note however that human capital cannot be owned or fully controlled by an organisation and employees are free to move and take their knowledge with them. It is important therefore that organisations seek to develop employees in order to increase their skill set but also to decrease their motivation to want to leave. Similarly Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002) cautioned that if those who contribute their human and intellectual capital (employees) are not given the opportunity to utilise this and see the benefits it creates they will go where they have the opportunity to realise it. In short, the resource based view explains how human capital and social networks among employees can be treated as a key strategic resource such that successful performance management is a necessary requirement of competitiveness.

For some time, researchers have questioned the validity of performance management as a tool which actually delivers these results (Haines & St-Onge, 2012; Pulakos & O'Leary 2011). Where performance management *per se* is seen as not working, many organisations rely solely on an annual appraisal as their means of managing performance and this has attracted the most critique. In most large organisations appraisals typically take place every six or twelve months. A key component of the performance appraisal is the formal communication of individual feedback to employees (Elicker, Levy & Hall, 2006) but feedback on an annual basis may often be mistimed and irrelevant to an event which might have occurred well in advance of the appraisal meeting.

This paper explores the use of a Personal Development Plan to both agree goals and provide more regular feedback and communication to employees, as an alternative to the annual appraisal. Floodgate and Nixon (1994) note that one of the key benefits of a PDP is to prompt line managers to be coaches and developers of others, something which should be done more than once or twice per year. Beausaert, Segers and Gijselaers (2011) argue that empirical evidence for the effectiveness of PDPs is scarce. They further note that the small amount of empirical research which does exist has focused on an educational or health setting and very little research has been conducted on the use and effectiveness of PDPs in the private sector.

This paper therefore investigates the use of a PDP and its relationship to successful completion of workplace goals in one private sector organisation. It will concentrate on two areas, firstly the diagnostic ability of line managers to discuss and agree appropriate goals in the first instance, whether proximal, distal or a mixture of both and secondly, the support offered in terms of realising these goals. The intention is to draw a rich picture of the use of PDPs within an organisation to indicate where strengths and weaknesses lie in order to highlight good practice but also suggest areas of improvement. The paper offers recommendations for HRD practitioners to enhance or introduce a robust and value adding PDP process.

Personal Development Plans

Given that employees are inseperable from competitive advantage, one of the drivers behind business success is the continuous learning of employees to be able to adapt to a rapidly changing internal and external environment. In order to stimulate employees to undertake learning and development activities, organisations are utilising personal development plans (PDPs) as a strategic tool. PDPs have become increasingly popular as demands for staff to become more adaptable and flexible have grown (Bennett, 2006) and are essential, if only for experienced staff to stay up to date with policies, products and other changes (Higson and Wilson, 1996).

The origins of PDPs can be traced back to the use of portfolios by artists and photographers to showcase their work (Beausaert, Segers & Gijselaers, 2011). Students in secondary schools and higher education then began using portfolios and they often contained a PDP, a collection of their work and a reflective report. PDPs grew in popularity within organisations and today are generally seen as formal learning tools. Beausaert, Segers, Fourage & Gijselaers (2013, p.146) define a PDP as 'an assessment tool embedded in a larger assessment cycle of development and performance reviews', in other words part of the performance management toolkit of line managers. The PDP is seen as both reflective and forward looking as it gathers information about the development which has taken place and allows the individual to reflect on this whilst also allowing them to plan further development either based on this reflection or with the intent of moving in a different direction. Beausaert *et al* (2011) note four key characteristics of the PDP; it must give an overview of what has happened in the past as well as indicate plans for the future, it should be composed by the employee but in consultation with the line manager, should be used as a basis for conversations with the line manager to provide the employee with feedback to stimulate reflection and serve as a decision making tool. Higson and Wilson (1996) add a further key feature which must be present for the PDP to enable success; namely that everybody should have one including managers at all levels.

Viewed as formal learning tools, PDPs can be used for different purposes. For example, Grohnert, Beausaert & Segers (2014) distinguish between formative and summative uses. Formative use aims to promote self-directed learning and foster reflective practice within the individual. The summative approach seeks to assess employee learning and performance improvements. These distinctions in turn give way to two methods of implementation; voluntary or mandatory. Voluntary use of a PDP is in line with the formative way of thinking whereby individuals gain insight and learn from their mistakes and begin to think critically. Mandatory use lends itself to the assessment viewpoint where performance is measured as a result of using the PDP. For PDPs to be effective, Beausaert *et al* (2011) identified three key supporting processes; learning and reflection, instruction and feedback and the motivating supervisor. Grohnert *et al.* (2014) note that for organisations adopting the mandatory approach supporting the PDP process is especially relevant. Higson and Wilson (1996) add that managers should be appraised on how well they manage the PDP process with their staff which would perhaps provide an indication of how committed the line manager is to the development process and how supportive they are being.

Whilst the PDP is seen as a positive tool to aid learning there are some concerns. Bennett (2006) notes there is the chance the PDP stays nothing more than a well-intentioned plan, the word 'personal' can lead to a separation from work and the organisation strategy, and they are often very short term orientated. Whilst noting this is not necessarily bad, the concern is that they may not fit with the longer term strategic planning of the organisation. Tamkin (1996) adds a cynical view that many organisations turned to self-development as a way of reducing costs as they sought to reduce the central development function and so the onus of development then fell on the individual. Despite these concerns however, the PDP is a document which is widely used as part of organisational performance management process so getting it right is of great importance.

Goal setting theory

Goal setting theory is recognised as a post training motivational technique to improve task performance. Locke (1968) observed that the essence of goal setting theory is that once a hard task has been accepted the only logical thing to do is try until the goal has been achieved or until a decision is made to lower or abandon the goal. Yamnill and McLean (2001) add that goal setting theory suggests two cognitive determinants of behaviour; intentions and values. Intentions are viewed as the immediate precursor of human action whereas values attain to the subsequent commitment of those goals. Brown (2005) makes the point that goal setting theory is complementary to social learning theory and argues that people with high self-efficacy set difficult goals and are highly committed to them. Furthermore people who set specific, difficult goals outperform those who don't set goals or set vague goals. Two further distinctions are made in relation to goal setting. Some research has focussed on the distinction between assigned and participatively set goals. Anderson and Wexley (2003) proposed that trainees set their own behavioural goals in collaboration with a trainer and contended that increased ownership of goals consequently enhanced positive transfer. Feldman (1981) took this one step further by involving line managers as well so the trainee, the trainer and the line manager agreed a set of mutually acceptable goals. A second distinction has also been made between distal (long term) goals and proximal (short term) goals. Weisweiler, Nikitopoulos, Netzel & Frey (2012) argue proximal goals lead to better performance than distal goals and Brown (2005) finds evidence that those who set both proximal and distal goals performed better than those who set only distal goals.

Goal setting theory places importance on the nature of the goal, i.e. distal or proximal and also on how the goal was reached, i.e. dictated by another (assigned) or in agreement with one or more others (participative). The literature also highlights the key role played by line managers, whether goals are dictated by them or agreed in consultation with them. The PDP has however attracted less attention with less empirical research available to determine the effects this can have on formalising goals and acting as a tool for both individuals and line managers to monitor their progress against set goals. The purpose of this research therefore is to evaluate the mediating effect the PDP could have in terms of individuals regulating their behaviour by directing attention and action towards achieving their goals and thus transferring training to their work environment and personal development.

Research Methods

Case study research approach was applied. Eisenhardt describes case study as, "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (Ravenswood, 2010, p680). A case study approach was therefore chosen for this study in order to provide a series of insights around PDP in use and in context.

Field setting

The research took place in a FTSE 250 Midshares Company within the financial services sector. As well as the Head Office which contains all central functions there is a field structure spread across the UK and Ireland divided geographically into Divisions. Each Division is led by a Divisional Operations Manager with further splits into regions and areas with management at the head of each of these. All employees are salaried but a target driven bonus scheme also operates for field based employees. Training and Development (T&D) is prevalent within the organisation as a People Development team exists both within the Head Office and across the field structure. The Head Office team is responsible for company induction, e-learning, leadership and management development programmes and ad hoc companywide initiatives. The field based team assist with the role out of companywide initiatives and are also responsible for more localised training needs. A performance management programme exists whereby bi-annual appraisals are conducted across the whole organisation and a PDP is submitted to the Head Office team following these appraisals.

Research was conducted in one Division in the North of England containing 48 line managers and 208 employees working at branch level. This Division was chosen because it is the largest both geographically and by head count which should increase validity of the findings and support generalisations.

Data collection and sample

Primary research was conducted using two surveys. One was directed at line managers who are termed the *reviewer,* with the other directed at employees who are termed the *reviewee*. Some levels of management fell into both categories as some managers agree and review their own teams' PDP's but also have their PDP agreed and reviewed by their Line Manager. In this case they were judged solely as the *reviewer*. The survey addressed the bi-annual appraisal meeting which includes a review of past performance with a view to setting future focussed goals based on the review. Divisional Operations Managers were excluded from the sample due to their seniority. Regional Operations Managers and Area Managers were included in the reviewer sample. All Regional Operations Managers and over 90% of Area Managers were male and the majority had been with the company for over ten years. Salaries for these groups ranged between £35,000 and £60,000 before bonus. The reviewer sample took into account the whole employee population for this Division. Again this was heavily male orientated (over 80%) but with salaries ranging from £20,000 to £24,000 before bonus. Whilst length of service was still high for this group, there were more employees who were new to the organisation (two years or less).

The purpose of the line manager (*reviewer*) survey was to establish how much preparation they allowed for before the appraisal/PDP meeting, their understanding of agreeing development needs and the type

of goals and timescales utilised. The survey also focussed on how much time they devoted to supporting the employee and the PDP process after the meeting. It was also important to establish the level of guidance and support they felt they had been provided with to enable them to successfully complete and support a PDP with their team members. The purpose of the employee (*reviewee*) survey was to also identify how much time they felt they had to prepare for the meeting, to establish how long the meeting took as this would determine the importance placed on it and to focus on the review frequency after the meeting was complete and development needs had been identified. In addition to the frequency of review question there was also a question to the employee relating to how often identified development needs are followed up, to determine whether identified activities did actually take place or whether they were simply identified because the process required it.

Participants were given a series of responses for each question and asked to choose the one most closely related to their belief. The majority of responses were a numerical frequency in terms of how many times something happened: none, once, twice, or more than twice, for example or one hour, two hours, three hours, more than three hours. The options for the questions to reviewees with regards to how often the development activity was carried out were: always, mostly, sometimes or never. Four possible responses were identified in these questions with the intention to not overawe the respondent with too many choices and also to remove the neutral middle ground. A text box was left at the end of the survey for additional comments. In addition to these numerical responses six options were given with regards to development activities which could take place: coaching, on the job training, mentoring, secondment, shadowing and training courses. These options were provided to both groups with the intention to identify how much thought had been put into the development activity which might give an indication to how much follow up and support would be offered but also to provide an indication of what level of transfer of training could be expected.

A response rate of 73% was achieved for line managers and a 53% response rate for employees. A sample of PDPs which already existed was also reviewed. These were completed as part of the regular performance management policy of the organisation, and held centrally by HR. Copies of PDP's completed within the sample Division were reviewed along with copies from other Divisions in order to benchmark the sample Division and identify if the findings are replicated or if they are specific to this Division.

The intention was to use this documentation as a control mechanism as it would have been completed at a time when line managers did not feel to be under scrutiny and so behaved in a natural manner. It was hoped that using this documentation as a control would help to identify any bias shown by the respondent with regard to what they thought the answer should be (in response to the survey) and what their actual performance indicated from when the PDP was completed.

Results

Diagnostic Stage

The results from the reviewee survey indicate they have more than two days to prepare for the meeting with the majority stating they have more than one week. The response from the reviewers however

showed a marked difference in time scale with the majority indicating they gave their employees just one days' notice.

Table 1.

Q) How much notice are you generally given prior to the meeting taking place?				
	<1 day	1 day	2 – 7 days	>7 days
Reviewee	4%	3%	31%	61%
Reviewer	0%	60%	23%	17%

Both groups were asked how long on average the review meeting lasted. The consensus of opinion was between one and two hours although results showed a marked difference where reviewers felt the meeting lasted generally for one hour whilst there was a more even split with reviewees believing it lasted between one and two hours.

Table 2.

Q) How long on average does the PDP review meeting last?				
	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours	>3 hours
Reviewee	40%	46%	14%	0%
Reviewer	76%	18%	3%	3%

Both groups were asked which forms of development are agreed upon. There is evidence that a wide range of activities are considered and roughly the same emphasis is indicated between reviewers and reviewees. Coaching and on the job training feature heavily and are in line with the recent 'Annual survey report on Learning and Development', from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) which indicates that in house methods of development are more popular than external methods with on the job training, in-house development programmes and coaching by line managers or peers being the most commonly used and the most effective, (CIPD, 2015). The unexpected feature revealed in Table 3 regards secondment. From the responses given, seven employees think they have discussed secondment but only two line managers believe they have. Further investigation would be required to discover reasons for this.

Table 3. (Responses are in whole numbers rather than %)

Q) Which of the following forms of development have been agreed?						
	Coaching	On Job training	Mentoring	Secondment	Shadowing	Training course
Reviewee	58	63	25	7	29	27
Reviewer	33	21	14	2	19	19

Both reviewers and reviewees were asked whether development needs were linked to Key Result Areas (KRA) with 79% of reviewees saying they were and 74% of reviewers answering yes.

One final question was addressed to the reviewer only, which was 'how many development needs would be supported at one time?' with 92% of respondents answering two or three, 8% stating one and no one stating more than three.

The survey data has indicated a general consensus between reviewers and reviewees in terms of perception of how the diagnostic stage is completed. A sample of completed PDPs within this Division has also been reviewed in order to compare the survey response with actual performance. Where consensus appeared to exist from the survey results, inconsistency was evident in the actual documentation. Some of the PDPs that were reviewed indicated no development needs existed whilst the majority of those that did identify areas to be improved had highlighted tasks to be completed rather than indicating the required development to be able to perform a new task or to improve performance of existing tasks.

Where development activities had been identified they were very general with no indication of SMART (Specific, Measureable, Agreed, Realistic, Time bound) planning; 'Gain better IT skills' is one example of this where there is no indication of which specific IT skills are required to be enhanced. Furthermore there was little indication of whether target dates set to accomplish goals were proximal, distal or a mixture of both. The common denominator for most target dates was six months, which corresponds with the bi-annual frequency of the review meeting. A poor rating on the KRA was infrequently linked to the development needs of the individual and when comparing a selection of PDPs from the same Line Manager it was evident that the activities discussed and agreed upon were the same for each member of their team with the same target dates for completion.

Support stage

Both groups were asked how often they review the PDP and importantly how often they review it outside the formal review period which is every six months. Both groups believed reviews were driven by target dates agreed in the diagnostic stage although line managers were more emphatic in their assertion which offers some hope and support for goal setting theory. Table 4 however also introduces a note of caution as approximately one third of both groups believe they never review the PDP outside of the formal review timescale.

Table 4.

Q) How often do you review the PDP with your team member?				
	Every month	Every 2 months	Every 6 months	Depends on target dates
Reviewee	15%	6%	36%	42%
Reviewer	11%	11%	17%	60%
Q) How often is the PDP discussed outside the formal review period?				

	Never	Once	Twice	More than twice
Reviewee	27%	20%	12%	40%
Reviewer	31%	20%	20%	29%

One question was directed at reviewees only and this was to ascertain how often development activity took place once it had been identified and documented on the PDP. The results were encouraging as 40% answered always and 39% answered mostly. There is a note of caution however as 6% answered never.

Comparison of the survey results to the sample of completed PDPs suggested further inconsistency. A large portion of target dates were set at six months, indicating proximal goals are set but offering no indication of distal or a mix of proximal and distal target dates for different goals. Overwhelmingly there was little evidence of target dates being reviewed. The PDP documentation provides a column to indicate the actual completion date which was blank in the majority of reviewed PDPs. A further section allows for evidence of learning applied in the workplace to be documented which again was blank in the majority of PDP's reviewed.

Samples of PDPs were also reviewed from the other Divisions by way of benchmarking the results shown here. These samples revealed similar results as development needs were not always identified and when they were they were very general and infrequently linked to the overall appraisal and KRAs. There was little evidence of SMART objectives being taken into account and consequently little ongoing review taking place nor summative review once a target date had been reached or passed.

Two questions were directed at the reviewer only and these straddle the diagnostic and support stages. When asked if they felt confident in discussing personal development needs with their team, 94% said yes. In terms of training received with regards to working with PDP's, 49% stated less than one hour with a further 31% answering less than 4 hours. Only 17% felt they had received more than one day's training.

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper has focussed on whether more regular discussion and feedback, initiated by the goals set on a PDP, are an effective substitute for annual appraisals in terms of employee development. Two stages (diagnostic and support) have been identified as being significant with focus falling on the role played by the line manager. Based on the survey results, evidence was found that line managers understand and participate in the diagnostic stage. Reviewees believed they were given plenty of time to prepare for the review meeting and this generally lasted for at least an hour if not longer providing support to Burke and Hutchins' (2007) contention that support comes in the form of discussing new learning. It also supports the view held by Peter Drucker that managers should be innovators who create exchanges in order to reach organisational objectives (Wallman, 2010). No more than three development needs were identified at one time and a variety of activities were used in line with current trends as noted by the CIPD (2015). Analysis of completed PDPs further indicated that a distinct diagnostic stage takes place but the effect of this in terms of developing skills to meet organisational objectives is questionable. There

was no evidence of SMART goals being set and in most cases the development need was merely an instruction to do a part of their job which doesn't foster development as it presumes the employee already possesses the required skill. Locke and Latham (2006) note that performance is a function of both ability and motivation and a goal will be accomplished so long as a person is committed to it and has the requisite ability to attain it. If the ability is absent yet the requirement to complete the task is prescribed this may lead to a reduction in the self-efficacy of the individual. Wood and Bandura (1989) argue that self-efficacy determines levels of motivation and people with doubts about their self-efficacy generally settle for average solutions and average performance and to this extent training or learning transfer will be low. Reduced self-efficacy and low levels of motivation will not therefore enhance organisational performance. Evidence points to short term planning at best with almost all target dates on the existing PDPs falling within a six-month window, however as Weisweiler *et al* (2012) argue, proximal goals lead to better performance than distal goals so the importance of short term goals should not be discarded. The documentation itself however may be a contributing factor to this short term planning as the personal details section of the PDP asks for the *'Period covered, start and end dates'*. The existence of an end date section automatically leads people to set target dates within the six-month period between reviews taking place and thus the opportunity for distal goals alone or proximal and distal goals to be set is reduced. The study also highlights the lack of training received by line managers in how to complete a PDP, which in itself is a development need, yet nothing was mentioned on any line manager's PDP. Eighty percent of respondents felt they had less than half a day's (four hours) training which falls short of what would be expected if the process was to be carried out thoroughly, figures which are echoed by de Jong *et al* (1999) who found that 75% of respondents to their survey on devolving HRD to line managers were positive about taking on these duties but with certain conditions and the condition most often mentioned was training for first line managers. Lawler and McDermott (2003) also found a strong positive association between training for managers doing appraisals and the effectiveness of performance management.

Conclusions from this research are that a distinct diagnostic stage exists and attempts are made by reviewers to identify development needs and goals with target dates set to achieve them by. However a substantial amount of further training is required to help line managers understand the differences between proximal and distal goals and to be able to identify SMART development needs rather than aspects of the job role which need to be performed. Only if this is addressed will the self-efficacy and motivation of employees be maintained along with commitment to the PDP process. Furthermore the actual documentation should be revisited by the organisation to remove '*Period covered, start and end dates'* from the PDP so as to not restrict line managers in setting target dates for goals to be achieved.

Whilst the PDP literature focuses on the supporting line manager as playing a vital role, evidence to suggest that it happens in this organisation is hard to find. Both reviewers and reviewees answered positively to the survey in terms of follow up on support needs but the actual documentation indicates otherwise. Whilst there is evidence of goals being set there is very little evidence that these are reviewed or discussed once they have been documented. McIntyre (1963) argued that objectives must be placed in writing and then used as a day to day working guide but whilst there is clear evidence that goals are placed in writing there is little evidence that they are used as a day to day working guide. In most cases, target dates had passed with no indication as to whether the anticipated development had

occurred and whilst only 6% of reviewees answered that once set, development activity is never carried out, the reality looks different. However Locke and Latham (2006) argue that this might not in fact have the detrimental affect assumed here as what they refer to as subconscious priming might be in effect. The subconscious priming effect accepts that once a goal has been accepted and understood it remains in the periphery of the consciousness and does not need to be in a constant focal view as McIntyre (1963) suggests and goals which are subconsciously primed may still affect performance.

Although this research focussed on one Division within the organisation, evidence from a sample of the PDPs completed in the rest of the organisation indicates that many of the above conclusions would apply throughout, indicating a need for training to initiate a culture change with regards to the benefits of setting different types of goals (proximal and distal) and encouraging both line managers and employees to use the PDP to monitor and evaluate their development in a formative manner as described by Grohnert *et al*, (2014).

The organisation needs to reach a stage where development is not seen as a six monthly checkpoint but is seen as regular continuous professional development (CPD) which Megginson and Whittaker (2007, p3) refer to as *'a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development by engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and action'.* The PDP in this instance would then become one used formatively on a voluntary basis for self-directed learning and reflection rather than the mandatory use now which focuses on appraising performance.

As a study located in one private organisation the findings cannot be generalised but they do reveal useful issues for HRD practitioners to consider. More research into different sizes of organisation and different sectors is needed to paint a rich picture of PDP usage. It is also recognised that the survey style allowed little chance to discover the feelings and motives behind the answers and so could not address the specified aim of painting a richer picture, instead useful practice has been identified which further qualitative study should focus on to gain further insight. Finally the study concentrated on the use of a PDP as a physical document and expected this to be updated with progress changes. This focus on documented 'proof' that goals have been achieved may in fact limit its findings and an area for future study might be to compare the relative merits of written and verbal goals in relation to the subconscious priming effect.

This study has implications for both research and practice. In terms of research it supports the much published view that managers need training in the art of performance management in general but specifically highlights training with regard to effectively using a PDP to enable formative employee development and transfer of training. It has highlighted a split between the diagnostic stage and support stage of working with a PDP where one appears to be carried out but the other is lacking. Further research to comprehend the effects of this for both the individual and organisation would be beneficial and help to further understand the effects of an organisation adopting the use of a PDP in its entirety.

In terms of practice, organisations are beginning to move away from annual appraisal. CIPD (2015) note Accenture, Microsoft, Gap and Expedia have moved towards more informal and more frequent methods of performance review with reasons cited such as the desire amongst younger workers in particular for immediate feedback. Whilst annual appraisals might not take place, these organisations have not dispensed with performance management as a process but something new and more frequent will

replace them. Using a PDP as a form of continuous personal development appears a viable alternative but, as this study has shown, for it to be a success all reviewees and reviewers (not just managers) will need to be trained in the process and this training and associated culture shifts may take years to embed.

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